Ceaușescu's Bucharest: Power, Architecture and National Identity

By

Vlad Moghioroși

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Supervisor: Professor Constantin Iordachi
Second reader: Professor Balázs Trencsényi

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Abstract

The thesis analyzes Nicolae Ceaușescu's redesign of Bucharest as part of the Romanian dictator's national communism and cult of personality. The symbol of this cult and manifestation of nationalism was the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center. Scholars generally agree that an analysis of the continuation of nationalism in Romanian planning and architecture in the twentieth century is crucial for understanding Ceaușescu's project for Bucharest. As such, the aim of this thesis is to brings a new perspective on the influence of Romanian 20th century planning and architecture on the construction of the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center. It also offers a new interpretation of the decision-making process behind the construction of the communist center. Using party archives, I argue that although nationalism continued to be used in Romanian planning and architecture after the communist takeover, the Ceaușescu regime differed significantly from both the Gheorghiu-Dej regime and the interwar period. Thus, I demonstrate that in the first part of Ceaușescu's regime the monumentality desired during the previous decades was notably absent. Moreover, contrary to the belief that the 1977 earthquake signaled the decisive change in the radicalization of Ceaușescu's policy towards architecture, I argue that a shift can be observed starting with 1976. Furthermore, I demonstrate that as early as 1977 Ceaușescu made little use of both the 1935 master plan and the experienced architects, thus further limiting the impact of the interwar plans on the Bucharest Political-Administrative project. The thesis uses party and state archives, the propaganda, interviews with architects, the legislation and the Western media.

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List of illustrations

Chapter 1

Fig. 1.1. Lahovary House. Source: http://mariuscruceru.ro/2010/06/06/casa-lahovary-lahovari/.

Fig. 1.2. ARO building by Horea Crangă on Tache Ionescu Boulevard (today Magheru Boulevard). Source: Union of Romanian Architects, in Luminița Machedon, and Ernie Scoffham. *Romanian modernism,* 171.

Fig. 1.3. Victory Square. Project of the committee of the Systematization Plan. Source: *Urbanismul*, no. 11-12 (November-December 1937).

Fig. 1.4. Victory Palace. Source: http://gov.ro/ro/guvernul/palatul-victoria.

Fig 1. 5. War School. Source: Mircea Hudek. Agerpres archive. https://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/05/25/la-pas-prin-bucuresti-universitatea-nationala-de-aparare-carol-i--09-31-40.

Fig. 1.6. Church of the Nation. Source: *Arhitectura*, no. 3-4 (July-December 1940): 47.

Fig. 1.7. Scânteia House. Source: Vlad Moghioroși.

Fig. 1.8. Palace Hall. Source: Armand Rosenthal. Agerpres Archive. https://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/05/25/la-pas-prin-bucuresti-universitatea-nationala-de-aparare-carol-i--09-31-40.

Chapter 2

Fig 2.1. Project Anca Petrescu team June 1977. Source: ANR, SANIC, Colecția Documente Fotografice, album no. 222, 2, photo 3.

Fig. 2.2. Final systematization project. Source: ANR, SANIC, Colecția Documente Fotografice, album no. 222, 15, photo 44.

Fig. 2.3. House of the Republic. Version 8 - July 1981. Source: ANR, SANIC, Colecția Documente Fotografice, album no. 222, 25, photo 76.

Fig. 2.4. House of the Republic. Version 9 - July 1981. Source: ANR, SANIC, Colecția Documente Fotografice, album no. 222, 26, photo 78.

Fig. 2.5. Ștefan Bălan et al., *București. Monografie* [Bucharest. Monograph] (Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1985), *Hartă turistică (zona centrală)* [Turist map (central area)].

Fig. 2.6. House of the Republic. Simion Mechno. Agerpres foto. https://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/07/12/la-pas-prin-bucuresti-palatul-parlamentului-casa-poporului--10-34-31.

Table of contents

Introduction 1

Chapter 1. Preservation, monumentality and national architecture in 20th century Romania 8

1.1. Architecture, nationalism and modernism in the Romanian kingdom 9

1.2. The interwar plans during the first decades of communism 17

1.3. Preservation and national architecture under Ceaușescu 21

Chapter 2. Nationalism and the construction of the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center 26

2.1. The origins of the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center 27

2.2. Planning a new communist center 30

2.3. The consequences of nationalism on the redesign of Bucharest 40

Chapter 3. Opposition, propaganda and the post-1989 developments 45

3.1. Protests abroad and in Romania 45

3.2. The attitude of the regime: propaganda and repression 51

3.3. Bucharest after 1989 55

Conclusion 58

Bibliography 60

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Introduction

Architecture plays a key role in any regime's attempt to express its power. This is generally carried out through constructions that symbolize the new political order. Although such changes are not limited to a specific area, the capital possesses a central role as the political core of the regime. Dictators such as Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin and Tito are among the most prominent figures that attempted to legitimize their power through the redesign of the capital city. The construction of the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center was also an attempt to exhibit political legitimization, namely the intertwinement of Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult of personality with nationalism. This thesis studies the relation between ideology, architects and the dictator in implementing the Political-Administrative Center project, in the context of Romanian twentieth century architecture and urban planning.

The grandeur illustrated by the Victory of Socialism Boulevard (*Bulevardul Victoria Socialismului*) and the House of the Republic (*Casa Republicii*) is not unique for Bucharest. Mussolini and Hitler had similar plans, namely Rome's *Via dell'Impero*, connecting the Colosseum with *Piazza Venezia*, and Berlin's Hall of Glory and the north-south axis. Stalin and Tito also wanted a break with the past through architecture, illustrated by Moscow's Palace of the Soviets and its corresponding grand avenue, and New Belgrade's Federal Executive Council, linked to the railway station by a central axis. Only Ceaușescu and Mussolini, and partially Tito, managed to implement their projects. Hitler was stopped by the outbreak of the Second World War, while in Moscow the Seven Sisters were built after the war.

However, the comparison of the projects for Bucharest, Berlin, Moscow, Rome and Belgrade demonstrates that the redesign of Ceaușescu's capital is an important case study that fits in the general context of architectural planning under prominent European dictators and

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that such an approach would add significant value to the existing literature on the reconstruction of capitals on ideological foundations. The Political-Administrative Center, if seen in the context of the failure of Ceaușescu's national communism, appears to be a relic of the past. It nevertheless continues to shape the identity of the city, although it remains difficult to integrate in the pre-existing urban structure.

Ceauşescu came to power in 1965. A feature of his regime was the promotion of the dictator's cult of personality, intertwined with a form of national communism. As Verdery points out, he offered the possibility of linking the party to the nation and not just to the workers.[1] Hence, nationalism played a key role in the official discourse. Architecture was an important way of illustrating the achievements of the nation and of its ruler. This is particularly interesting in the case of Bucharest's Political-Administrative Center, which included the House of the Republic, the second largest administrative building in the world after the Pentagon, and the Victory of Socialism Boulevard, planned to be larger than the Champs-Elysées. The syntagm "Civic Center" is also used for the new center of Bucharest. I will refer however to the new socialist center as the "Political-Administrative Center" since it was the expression preferred by Ceaușescu and the most often encountered in party archives. The "Civic Center" seemed to be used mainly in relation to the centers of the provincial cities, although even in this situation the syntagm "Political-Administrative Center" is also used. Regarding the palace, the initial name was the "People's House," but Ceaușescu apparently regarded this label as demagogic and meaningless and thus the name was changed to the "House of the Republic."[2] Although the building is still commonly labeled

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[1] Katherine Verdery, *National ideology under socialism: identity and cultural politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (University of California Press, 1991), 118.

[2] Silviu Curticeanu, *Mărturia unei istorii trăite: imagini suprapuse* [The testimony of a lived history: overlapping images] (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 2000), 315. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

the "People's House," I will use the expression "House of the Republic," the name encountered in official documents.

The way in which the constructions for the Political-Administrative Center were carried out had a negative impact on the economy, the existing architectural heritage and the population. Information in the Western media often suggested that approximately 40000 citizens were evacuated from their homes. The compensations were modest and often paid one year and a half after the demolitions.[3] Entire neighborhoods and thousands of buildings, in some cases centuries old, were destroyed in order to make room for the new Political-Administrative Center. The magnitude of these destructions is not known, some suggesting that around 9300 buildings were destroyed.[4] The project involved huge costs for a country facing an economic downfall. The communist regimes rarely made public economic data, and hence it is problematic to estimate the costs of projects such as the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center. In the case of Ceaușescu's palace and its surroundings, it was estimated that the cost was about 800 million dollars.[5] The entire Political-Administrative Center on the other hand was believed to have cost 1.2 billion dollars.[6]

Since it was meant to be the political core of Romanian communism, the Political-Administrative Center received significant attention from scholars. Early contributions on the topic belong to Dinu C. Giurescu, Maria de B.A.U. Cavalcanti and Mariana Celac. Giurescu's study is an attempt to analyze the phases that led to the destruction of Bucharest and the

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[3] Dan Ionescu, "More Protests Against Demolitions in Bucharest," Romanian Situation Report/11, October 2, 1986, 35. HU OSA 300-8-47: 46/2; Situation Reports: Romania, 1986; Situation Reports; Publications Department; Records of the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

[4] Mihai Olteanu, "Sistematizarea urbană. Studiu de caz: municipiul București (1965-1989)," [The urban sistematization. Case study: the Bucharest municipality (1965-1989)], in *România în anii 1948-1989* [Romania between 1948-1989] ed. D. C. Giurescu, vol. 10 of *Istoria Românilor* [The History of the Romanians] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2013), 917.

[5] "Debt paid but...," 13 December 1989, FF033 B-wire. HU OSA 300-60-1: 2/5; Administration: National Committees: Civic Center 1983 - 1989; Subject Files; Romanian Unit; RFE/RL RI.

[6] "The cult of Ceaușescu," 30 November 1989, FF117 B-wire. HU OSA 300-60-1: 2/5; Administration: National Committees: Civic Center 1983 - 1989; Subject Files; Romanian Unit; RFE/RL RI.

systematization of villages, aiming at raising the awareness of the international community.[7] A more thorough approach is offered by Cavalcanti.[8] Her study sees the redesign of Bucharest from the perspective of power, namely the impact of dictators on architecture. However, Cavalcanti did not analyze the role of architects in the initial phases of the project and the role of the pre-communist architectural projects. Celac on the other hand does admit the difficulty of identifying the author of the Political-Administrative Center, but in the end places the entire responsibility on Ceaușescu.[9] A similar position is taken by Dana Petrescu and Renata Salecl, who consider the project the result of the dictator's ambition, thus reinforcing the initial points of view.[10] Salecl even argues that a competition existed between Ceaușescu and North Korea's Kim Il Sung, without presenting any evidence. Thus, for a long time the construction was attributed only to Ceaușescu, but without significant evidence to prove this idea.

Augustin Ioan and Maria Raluca Popa wrote important contributions for understanding the construction of the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center.[11] Both scholars demonstrate that Ceaușescu's project for Bucharest can be better understood by comparing it to the plans from pre-communist Romania and with similar projects from other totalitarian regimes. Popa thus explains Ceaușescu's desire for a monumental and prestigious city through the pre-socialist Romanian planning and the tradition of socialist city planning. Popa also seeks to demonstrate the multitude of actors involved in planning the Political-Administrative Center, contesting in this way the idea that the entire responsibility should be

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[7] Dinu C. Giurescu, *The Razing of Romania's Past* (Baltimore.MD: J.D. Lucas Printing Company, 1989).
[8] Maria De Betania Uchoa Cavalcanti, "Urban reconstruction and autocratic regimes: Ceausescu's Bucharest in its historic context," *Planning Perspectives* 12, no. 1 (1997).
[9] Mariana Celac, "O analiză comparată a limbajului totalitar în arhitectură," [A comparative analysis of the totalitarian language in architecture] in *Miturile comunismului românesc* [The myths of Romanian communism], ed. Lucian Boia (Bucharest: Editura Universităţii Bucureşti, 1998), second edition, 305.
[10] Doina Petrescu, "The People's House, or the voluptuous violence of an architectural paradox," in *Architecture and Revolution: Contemporary Perspectives on Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1999). Renata Salecl, *(Per) versions of Love and Hate* (Verso: London, New York, 2000).
[11] Maria Raluca Popa, "Restructuring and Envisioning Bucharest. The Socialist Project in the Context of Romanian Planning for a Capital, a Fast Changing City and an Inherited Urban Space, 1852-1989" (PhD diss., Central European University, 2004). Augustin Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project: A Romanian Case Study* (Institutul Cultural Român, 2009).

placed on Ceaușescu and his wife. Although Augustin Ioan argues that Ceaușescu's civic centers were inspired by the fascist versions of the Roman forums, he nevertheless supports the thesis of a continuity of nationalism in 20th century Romanian architectural plans. The two scholars based their studied primarily on text analysis, for example the architectural review *Arhitectura*, and also testimonies of former architects. The communist period on the other hand is more difficult to comprehend through the media, considering the small number of different opinions tolerated by the regime. Thus, the debates on architecture within the party and the negotiations between architects and ideologues can be understood mainly through party archives, which are absent from the studies of Popa and Ioan.

Based on party archives, this thesis analyzes Ceaușescu's discourses on architecture and compares them with the debates from the interwar period and from the Gheorghiu-Dej period. Hence, I will answer the following question: How did Ceaușescu's policy towards architecture differ from the policies of the previous regimes how did these differences impact the construction of the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center? Using Bucharest as a case study, I argue that although there was a continuity of nationalism in Romanian planning from the interwar years to communism, the Ceaușescu period differed significantly from the previous regimes. These differences had an impact on how the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center project was carried out.

Both the interwar period and the Gheorghiu-Dej regime illustrated contradictory discourses on preservation, national architecture and monumentality. However, In the first chapter I demonstrate that the monumentality desired in the interwar period and during the Gheorghiu-Dej regime was notably absent in the first part of Ceaușescu's rule. I also argue that Ceaușescu's position towards architecture started to change before the March 1977 earthquake. In the second chapter I analyze Ceaușescu's shift from preservation and functionalism to a national-monumental architecture. The chapter demonstrates that the

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Romanian President made little use of the 1935 master plan, which is often regarded as the source of inspiration for the systematization of Bucharest carried out in the 1980s. The chapter also shows that Ceaușescu already marginalized the experienced architects in the first phases of the Political-Administrative Center project, thus further blocking the use of the interwar plans. The last chapter deals with the opposition to the construction of the new center, the propaganda and the repressive measures.

The thesis uses party and state archives, the propaganda, interviews with former architects, the legislation and the Western media. The pre-communist debates on national architecture, modernism and preservation will be analyzed through art magazines, mainly *Arhitectura* and *Urbanismul*. Manifesto-like publications, *Towards an architecture of Bucharest* and *Towards a King Carol II style: the renaissance of Romanian architecture*, as well as the 1935 master plan will also be used. Regarding the communist period, *Scânteia*, the main party newspaper, *România Liberă*, *Săptămâna* and the architectural review *Arhitectura* will be studied. Likewise, the thesis will make us of propaganda works. The legal framework for the urban policy will be analyzed through the *Official Journal of Romania,* which includes laws, presidential decrees and governmental resolutions.

During communism, the media and the propaganda works generally lacked debates and conflicting points of view, which was also the case of architecture. Moreover, the information received by the public and the professionals about the construction of the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center was few and vague.[12] Hence, the sources of the National Archives of Romania, including the archives of the Central Committee (Chancellery, Propaganda and Agitation, Economic, Household, Agrarian, and Organizational Departments), the archives of the Popular Councils Affairs Committee and the Council of Ministers archives, as well as the sources of the Bucharest Municipality Division of the

[12] Celac, "O analiză comparată a limbajului totalitar," 289.

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National Archives will be useful for understanding the discussions on architecture under both Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceaușescu. The use of these sources will bring new insights into the continuity of the interwar plans after the communist takeover. Also, the archives illustrate the discrepancy between Ceaușescu's position towards architecture and the ideas promoted in the interwar period and during the Gheorghiu-Dej regime. In addition to the archives, a number of important interviews with prominent architects of the time are available at the Oral Archive of the "Sighet Memorial" Study Center. For example, interviews with Constantin Jugurică, Ștefan Lungu, Aurelian Stroe, Alexandru Budișteanu and Alexandru Beldiman. These sources will be used for analyzing the negotiations between the party and architects and the development of Ceaușescu's national architecture.

Since the regime avoided discussing in the national media the construction of the Political-Administrative Center, the Western media will be used to comprehend the opposition faced by the regime. It was often the case that protest letters from Romania were published in the West and the resistance of the population towards the demolitions was known only through the Western media, particularly Radio Free Europe and the French media. Hence, the sources of the Open Society Archives will be analyzed. The demolitions from Bucharest and the construction of the Political-Administrative Center are a frequent theme in the records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights and the archives of Radio Free Europe. I will also use the French journals and magazines *Actuel*, *Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, and *Le Monde*.

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Chapter 1. Preservation, monumentality and national architecture in 20th century Romania

Some of the most notable features of Romanian planning and architecture in the twentieth century were the debates on monumentality, preservation and national architecture. National architecture, in opposition to folk or vernacular architecture, is treated here as a style created and promoted with the help of the state as a way of enhancing national identity. The relatively democratic Romanian kingdom, the royal dictatorship of Carol II, the Legionary State, the Antonescu regime and the communist system have all had a desire to manipulate architecture in order to express their own legitimation through nationalism. This chapter will analyze the continuity of the discussions on national architecture, monumentality and preservation from the Kingdom of Romania to the communist period. The communist period is analyzed until roughly 1976, when the first significant changes in Ceaușescu's discourse towards architecture occur.

Although nationalism and monumentality were recurring themes in Romanian architecture, the chapter demonstrates that the monumentality desired in the interwar period and during the Gheorghiu-Dej regime was notably absent in the first part of Ceaușescu's rule. Hence, the first years of Ceaușescu's leadership were mainly characterized by a tendency to protect the existing architectural heritage. The chapter will first analyze the attempts to create a national architecture in the Kingdom of Romania, the architectural dimension of the debates between traditionalists and modernists, as well as the ambivalent discourses on renewal and preservation. The second subchapter evaluates how these debates and ideas continued after the communist takeover, during the short socialist realist period and the re-emergence of nationalism in the architectural discourses of the Gheorghiu-Dej regime. The last subchapter deals with the first part of Ceaușescu's regime, roughly the period between 1965 and 1976,

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and analyzes Ceaușescu's discourses on monumentality, tradition and modernism, as well as preservation.

1.1. Architecture, nationalism and modernism in the Romanian kingdom

Romania became a kingdom in 1881, as a result of the successful independence war against the Ottoman Empire. This meant an intensification of the nation-building process that became intertwined also with architecture. The Society of Romanian Architects played a decisive role in promoting the national identity in architecture. Hence, Ion Mincu's Lahovary house signaled the emergence of a national way of doing architecture: the neo-Romanian style (Fig. 1.1.). In the late 19th Mincu used as model for the new style the upper middle-class house from the hillside province of Wallachia, while later both Mincu and his followers used the Brâncoveanu style of Orthodox monasteries for creating a national monumental architecture.[13] The religious architecture was the preferred historical source.[14]

Fig. 1.1. Lahovary House.
Source: mariuscruceru.ro.

This nation-building campaign within the young state was paralleled by the nationalization of the newly acquired provinces, starting with Dobrogea. Considering the Ottoman-Muslim legacy, the authorities encouraged the construction of religious buildings in this province. Hence, the Constanţa Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, eradicated between 1883 and 1895, is the most emblematic architectural element of the nationalization of Dobrogea. A similar use of religious architecture can be observed in the post-1918 developments, particularly Transylvania. The process was however more problematic considering the relatively

[13] Ioan, *Modern Architecture*, 15.
[14] Carmen Popescu, *Le style national roumain* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Bucharest: Simetria,2004), 20.

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insignificant Romanian population in the urban centers, which was anyway partially Greek-catholic, and the predominantly protestant and catholic national minorities. Hence, the Romanian Orthodox Church, as the Romanian state itself, was in dire need of consolidating its authority in the newly acquired region. Monumental cathedrals were thus built in Timișoara, Cluj, Satu Mare and Alba Iulia. Although Alba-Iulia, the former capital of the Transylvanian principality, lost its importance throughout the centuries, it nevertheless carried a significant symbolic weight. Hence, in only one year, the state constructed the Coronation Cathedral, which imitated the Royal Church of Târgoviște, the former capital of Wallachia. The young Romanian liberal democracy was thus actively engaged in strengthening its authority through both secular and religious architecture.

The neo-Romanian style's attempt to play a part in the consolidation of the national identity of the Romanian state was reconfirmed following the 1918 unification. Also, the interwar debates between traditionalists, promoters of autochthonous values, and modernists, opponents of tradition and supporters of innovation, shaped also the sphere of architecture. The traditionalist architects were the promoters of Ion Mincu's neo-Romanian style. But despite its ambitious role, the style had however several problems that eventually hindered its development. Since it was meant to be a unifying style, it ignored the cultural diversity of the various Romanian regions. Furthermore, the national style seemed rather eclectic, considering the use of local motifs together with the Beaux Arts language.[15] When it did attempt to reflect local architecture, it often used elements that were spread throughout the Balkans. One example is the *cula* tower, the fortified prismatic house specific for Wallachia in the 17th and 18th centuries.[16] Lastly, the style was costly, heavy and difficult to apply beyond elegant

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[15] Giuseppe Cinà, *Bucureşti: de la sat la metropolă: identitate urbană şi noi tendinţe = Bucharest: from village to metropolis: urban identity and new tendencies* (Bucharest: Capitel, 2010), 116-117. Bilingual
[16] Mihaela Gavriş and Ana Maria Zahariade, "The Neo-Romanian Style. Elements of Language," in *Genius Loci*, ed. Carmen Popescu and Ioana Teodorescu (Bucharest: Simetria, 2002), 58.

public edifices.[17] But even in the case of public buildings, its reliance on the architecture of small churches made its application to monumental constructions problematic. Solutions to these problems were thus sought in other styles.

Fig. 1.2. ARO building by Horia Creangă on Tache Ionescu Boulevard (today Magheru Boulevard).
Source: Union of Romanian Architects, in Luminita Machedon, and Ernie Scoffham. *Romanian modernism*, 171.

The problems of the neo-Romanian style offered the opportunity for the emergence of modern architecture in Romania. A symbol of Romanian interwar modernism is the Take Ionescu-Ion C. Bratianu boulevard from Bucharest (Fig. 1.2.). Its main promoters were Marcel Iancu, trained in Zurich, and Horia Creangă, who studied at the Bucharest School of Architecture and later at the Parisian Ecole des Beaux Arts. Iancu was also the artistic director of the *Contimporanul* magazine, the main promoter of modern architecture in Romania. The magazine was the opponent of *Arhitectura*, the journal of the Society of Romanian Architects, supporter of the national style. By 1935 however, *Arhitectura* moved towards a conciliation stance. Hence, Florea Stănculescu, the director of the journal, proposed specific functions for both styles: a hotel, a bank, a theater or a shop should be built in the modern style, whereas the national style would best fit a pub, a private residence or a country house.[18] The requests of the market and the problems of the neo-Romanian style thus consolidated the position of the modernists.

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[17] Cinà, *Bucureşti*, 113.
[18] Florea Stănculescu, "Stil românesc și stil modern" [National style and modern style] *Arhitectura*, no. 1-4 (May 1935): 14.

The supporters of the national style were however not the only opponents of the modernists. The destructive ideas proposed by the modernists worried the preservationists, among which prominent figures such as Nicolae Iorga. An important source for understanding the ideas of the Romanian interwar modernists is the manifesto *Towards an architecture of Bucharest*, signed by Iancu, Creangă and Octav Doicescu. The title reminds of Le Corbusier's 1925 *Towards an Architecture*.[19] Paradoxically, although Iancu deplored the demolition of the Colțea Tower,[20] he nevertheless stated that the progress of Bucharest required the disappearance of the historical Lipscani Street.[21] Such ideas did not stand apart from other modern projects of the time. For example, Le Corbusier's 1925 "Voisin Plan" also proposed the removal of medieval Paris.[22] Regarding his 1930s suggestions for Moscow, Le Corbusier considered as worthy of preserving only the Kremlin, the Lenin Mausoleum, the Bolshoi theater, the St. Basil church and some occasional religious buildings.[23] But Iancu also wanted a leader that would implement the modern vision of the city: "Where is the iron hand, the visionary mind and the daring power that our city now desperately needs?"[24] Iancu never put these ideas into practice, but they eventually proved to have a long impact on Romanian urban planning.

Similar destructive features were eventually supported also by the state, namely through the 1935 Bucharest master plan. The plan was designed by four architects, Duiliu Marcu, G. M. Cantacuzino, R. Bolomey and I. Davidescu, and an engineer, Teodor Rădulescu. There is no consensus among scholars whether the plan should be regarded as

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[19] Juliana Maxim, "The new, the Old, and the Modern: The New, the Old and the Modern: Architecture and Its Representation in Socialist Romania," (PhD diss., Cambridge: MIT, 2006), 36, note 27.
[20] Marcel Iancu, "Utopia Bucureştilor," [Utopia of Bucharest] in *Către o arhitectură a Bucureştilor* [Towards an architecture of Bucharest] (Bucharest: Tribuna Edilitara, 1935), 10.
[21] Ibid., 19.
[22] Jean-Louis Cohen, *Le Corbusier and the Mystique of USSR: Theories and Projects for Moscow, 1928-1936* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 24-25.
[23] Ibid., 140-141.
[24] Iancu, "Utopia Bucureştilor," 11.

modern or as the first step towards a Carol II style.[25] The proposal to construct a replica of Trajan's Column in the Victory Square (*Piaţa Victoriei*) could be however regarded as a sign that the master plan was indeed paving the way for the Latin-based Carol II style (Fig. 1.3.).[26]

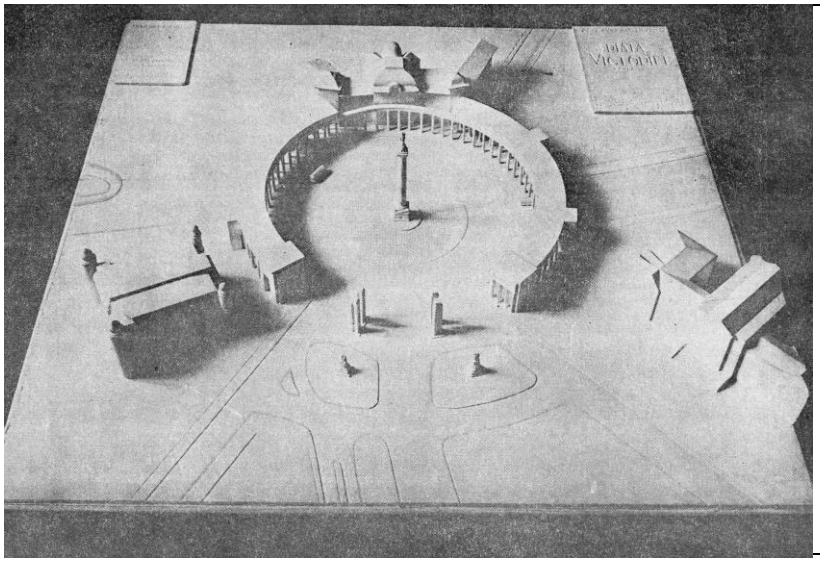

Fig. 1.3. Victory Square. Project of the committee of the Systematization Plan.
Source: *Urbanismul*, year XIV, no. 11-12 (November-December 1937).

The plan has often been compared with similar projects from the interwar period. Considering also Marcu's sympathy for the fascist *littorio* style, one opinion is that the plan was meant to illustrate a Romanian renascence just like the fascist one, based on the Latin origin.[27] On the other hand, it is considered comparable with the 1935 General Plan for Moscow because of its attempt to reconstruct the center of the city into a prestigious power nucleus.[28] The authors of the Bucharest master plan proposed a capital with grand boulevards, monumental buildings and grand squares, which would have eventually come into conflict with the old city. Nevertheless, the master plan promised the preservation of the historical religious edifices.[29] This contradiction between the desire for monumentality and preservation

[25] Popa for example considers the plan the result of a modernist urban conception, the growing authoritarian tendencies of Carol II being responsible for not putting it into practice. See Popa, "Restructuring and Envisioning Bucharest," 90. On the other hand, Ioan criticized the labeling of the plan as modern, seeing it instead as a manifestation of the Carol II style. See Ioan "Arhitectura interbelică şi chestiunea identităţii colective" [Inter-war architecture and collective identity] *Echinox Journal*, no. 3 (2002): 86. Bilingual title.
[26] Marcu et al., *Planul Director de Sistematizare al municipiului Bucureşti: memoriu justificativ* [The Major systematization plan of the Bucharest municipality: explicative memo] (Bucharest: Institutul Urbanistic al României, 1935), 68.
[27] Ioan, "Arhitectura interbelică şi chestiunea identităţii colective," 86.
[28] Popa, "Restructuring and Envisioning Bucharest," 187.
[29] Marcu et al., *Planul Director de Sistematizare*, 69-70.

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would become a recurring theme in Romanian urban planning throughout the twentieth century.

The emerging Carol II style followed a similar logic. Although it was never fully implemented, the style was however theorized by architects such as Ioan D. Trajanescu, Ion D. Enescu and Petre Antonescu. The Carol II period was characterized by an ambivalent attitude towards preservation and renewal. A 1935 guide captured this contradiction: "In spite of the rapid development, the city does not distance itself from the things that gave its earlier charm."[30] The style was to be inspired by autochthonous monuments, "kept for centuries in monasteries, villages, boyar houses."[31] The style was also, according to Antonescu, a critique of the "false Occidentalism," referring here to the modern style.[32] But the new national architecture was also a call for the removal of the medieval structure of the cities. Hence, Enescu described the style as the process of replacing "the broken, disconnected, crumbled line" with the "straight line," thus overlooking the medieval heritage.[33] This was a sign that the popular art invoked for the creation of the style was not the real source of inspiration. Rather, as Petre Antonescu stated, the promoters of the new style were looking towards ancient Greece and Rome.[34]

The Romanian architecture was moving towards Piacentini's fascist *stile littorio*.[35] This choice is not completely senseless, considering the common Latin claim of the Romanian and Italian nations. The Carol II style thus seemed to rather be a local variety of the 1930s-stripped classicism, as illustrated also by the comparison of the Romanian, Soviet and Nazi

[30] Alexandru Cicio-Pop and Alexandru Bădăuţă, *Ghidul Bucureștilor* [Guide of Bucharest], (Bucharest: Editura Ghidul României, 1935), 7.
[31] Ioan D. Trajanescu, "Promovarea arhitecturii româneşti" [Promoting the Romanian architecture], *Arhitectura*, no. 2 (April-June 1940): 8.
[32] Petre. Antonescu, *Către un stil regele Carol II: Renașterea arhitecturei românești* [Towards a King Carol II style: the renaissance of Romanian architecture] (Bucharest:1939), 13.
[33] Ion D. Enescu, "Stil Carol II," [Carol II style] *Arhitectura*, no. 2 (April-June 1939): 5.
[34] Antonescu, *Către un stil regele Carol II*, 15.
[35] Ioan, "The peculiar history of (post) communist public places and spaces: Bucharest as a case study," *The GeoJournal Library* 92, *The Post-Socialist City Urban Form and Space Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe after Socialism*, ed. Kirl Stanilov: 303.

pavilions of the 1937 Paris Exhibition. Two of the most important results of this new direction were the Victory Palace (*Palatul Victoriei*, today the headquarters of the government) and the Timișoara Opera both designed by architect Duiliu Marcu (Fig. 1.4.).[36] The War School (1937-1939) on the other hand (Fig. 1. 5.), by the same Marcu, resembles the *La Sapienza* university building (1932-1935). The Carol II period thus oscillated between a care for the existing architectural heritage and poplar art and the desire for monumental buildings inspired by international trends.

Fig. 1.4. Victory Palace.
Source: gov.ro.

Fig 1.5. War School.
Source: Mircea Hudek. Agerpres archive.

The abdication of the king in 1940 brought to the leadership of the country a Legionary regime more inclined towards Nazi Germany. Regarding the architecture, the legionary ideology was also eager to promote a national style. It made it clear that a return to the neo-Romanian style would not be pursued.[37] German architecture was praised by the legionaries

[36] Ioan, "Arhitectura interbelică şi chestiunea identităţii colective," 84.
[37] Victor Smigelschi, "Înfățișarea Bucureștilor" [The aspect of Bucharest], *Arhitectura*, no. 3-4 (July-December 1940): 44.

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for its promotion of classicism and the disciple and order that it reflected.[38] Hence, the Iron Guard wanted a monumental architecture in a Romanian style, looking especially towards Germany. The legionaries added however a religious dimension to their vision of architecture. Thus, along with the layouts for a Palace of the Captain and a Palace of Culture, the legionaries also had in mind a Church of the Nation (Fig. 1.6.).[39] The project was signed by architect Constantin Jojea. The Legionaries were however removed from the leadership of the state and were not able to implement their projects.

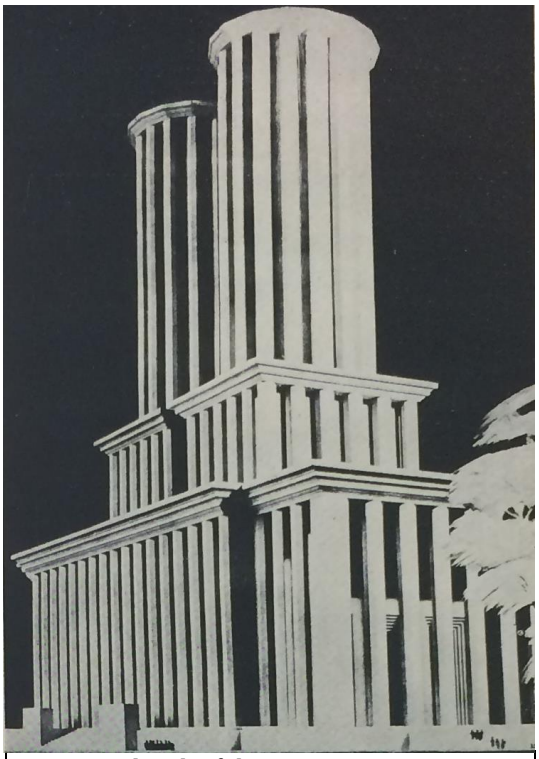

Fig. 1.6. Church of the Nation.
Source: *Arhitectura*, no. 3-4 (July-December 1940): 47.

Similar tendencies can be seen in the competition for a cathedral for Odessa (1942), during the military regime of Ion Antonescu. The projects submitted were not necessarily novelty. The wining project, "Saints Constantin and Elena," signed by Teodorescu and Jojea was a replica of Jojea's legionnaire Church of the Nation. Two other projects on the other hand were replicas of the Cluj and Timișoara cathedrals. Despite the war effort, the Antonescu regime was eager to build the cathedral, as a way of reflecting military victories, a policy probably inspired from Stephan the Great. One of the winning projects was even named "And defeating the Pagans we build a monastery." The comments of the assessment committee on the other winning project, "Saints Constantin and Elena," are however suggestive for the recurring problem of national architecture. Hence, the committee praised the authors for using

[38] "Arhitectura în Germania contemporană" [Architecture in contemporary Germany], *Arhitectura*, no. 3-4 (July-December 1940): 10, 13.
[39] "Arhitectura ca temă a gândirii" [Architecture as theme of thought], *Arhitectura*, no. 3-4 (July-December 1940): 47.

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the forms of the small Romanian churches, but acknowledge the lack of monumentally of the final product.[40] The cathedral was never constructed since Romania lost the war and Odessa, Antonescu being later sentenced to death. It thus remains unclear how the legionary or Antonescu version of national architecture would have looked like.

1.2. The interwar plans during the first decades of communism

The communist regime installed in Romania starting with 1945 was quick to criticize the projects of the former royal administration. This aspect can also be seen in terms of urban planning, the 1935 master plan being considered a project "designed in the bourgeois-capitalist spirit" in the memoir of architect Marcel Pompei.[41] Despite the monumentality envisioned by the authors of the 1935 master plan, Pompei's memoir criticized it for its lack of monumental buildings specific for a capital, such as the Opera, another theater and ministry headquarters.[42] Interestingly, Pompei himself was one of the architects of the Carol II period and even participated in a content proposed by the 1935 master plan, namely the one for the June 8 Square, today the Unification Square (*Piața Unirii*) with a project meant to emphasize Latinity.[43] Moreover, although the Moscow and Bucharest 1935 plans had common features, the Soviet plan was praised and given as an example.[44] Despite these contradicting points of view, a new socialist beginning was announced for Bucharest, in the form of a new master plan that would overcome the problems of the interwar projects.

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[40] "Concurs pentru Catedrala Odessa" [Competition for the Odessa Cathedral], *Arhitectura*, no. 3-4 (July-December 1942): 24.
[41] "Planul de sistematizare" [The systematization plan], ANR, Serviciul Municipiului București al Arhivelor Naționale (SMBAN), Fond Primăria Municipiului București, Serviciul Administrativ [Administrative Service], file 40/1948, 5. The document does not provide the name of the architect, only a signature, which Olteanu attributes to Pompei. Mihai Olteanu, "Reconstrucția socialistă a orașului București (1948-1952)" [The socialist reconstruction of Bucharest (1948-1952)], *Studii şi materiale de istorie contemporană (SMIC)*, no. 1 (2014): 13-14, note 41. Bilingual title.
[42] ANR, SMBAN, Fond Primăria Municipiului București, Serviciul Administrativ, file 40/1948, 5.
[43] See cover *Urbanismul*, no. 9-10 (September-October 1937).
[44] "Planul de sistematizare al capitale" [The systematization plan of the capital], Arhivele Naţionale ale României (ANR), Serviciul Arhivele Naţionale Istorice Centrale (SANIC), fond CC al PCR (Comitetul Central al Partidului Comunist Român [Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party]), Secția Economică [Economic Department], file 19/1951, 2.

The party was however incapable to offer expertise from its own ranks. In these conditions, the new regime had to rely on interwar experts. Hence, engineer Cincinat Sfințescu, the author of the 1921 systematization plan for Bucharest, and Duiliu Marcu, co-author of the 1935 master plan, were invited to contribute to the drawing of the 1948 plan.[45] Marcu's role as court architect for Carol II was thus ignored by the communist regime. Even Sfințescu, despite his sympathies for fascist and Nazi models, probed to be useful for the communists.[46] Furthermore, Marcu, was allowed to continue his work on the Victory Palace and even became president in 1952 of the newly established Union of Romanian Architects. Moreover, following Stalin's death, the Romanian communists started to avoid Soviet expertise. Thus, the party leaders, including Gheorghiu-Dej, started to compensate the lack of cadres not with Soviet experts but with older architects, with the condition that they followed the party and governmental lines and not their former convictions.[47] The interwar experts and their ideas were thus embraced quite early by the communist regime.

Apart from the increasing reliance on interwar architects, national elements in architecture continued to be used under the Gheorghiu-Dej regime, although not very explicitly. Alexandru Budișteanu, former chief architect of Bucharest, confirmed this thesis by offering as example the Scânteia House (1952-1957,

Fig. 1.7. Scânteia House.
Source: Vlad Moghioroși.

[45] "Referat asupra problemei întocmirii planului de sistematizare al Municipiului București" [Report on the issue of the elaboration of the systematization plan of Bucharest] ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie [Chancellery department], file 220/1949, 4.
[46] Sfinţescu, Cincinat, "O nouă ţinută - Un nou urbanism" [A new outfit - A new urbanism], *Urbanismul*, no. 5-7 (May-July 1940): 115-119.
[47] "Stenograma ședinței Prezidiului Consiliului de Miniștri și a Biroului Politic al Comitetului Central al P.M.R. din 25.XI.1953" [The Minutes of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers and of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of P.M.R. from 25.XI.1953], ANR, SANIC, fond Consiliul de Miniștri. Stenograme 1944-1959 [Council of Ministers. Minutes 1944-1959], file 9/1953, 219.

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Fig. 1.7).[48] The building resembles the Moscow Sisters the Warsaw Palace of Culture. Nevertheless, while acknowledging the monumentality of the building, Budișteanu believes that the monument was constructed based on a Romanian project, which includes Romanian elements. According to Ioan, these Romanian elements are visible in the Brâncovenesc style freezes that form the ornamentation of the building.[49]

Nikita Khrushchev's 1954 speech against Stalinist architecture and the growing tensions between the Soviet leader and Gheorghiu-Dej further stimulated the gradual reemergence of nationalism in the architectural discourse. Khrushchev's speech criticized socialist realism, urging the modernization of construction techniques and arguing against monumentalism.[50] A similar position can be observed in Gheorghiu-Dej's discourse, even before Khrushchev's denunciation of socialist realism. Hence, in November 1953, during a meeting of the Council of Ministers, the Romanian general secretary called for the industrialization of constructions and criticized the use of the built space for what he labeled "dead angels" to the detriment of the effectively used space.[51] Also before Khrushchev's speech, the Second Plenary of the Union of Romanian Architects from July 1954 deplored the excesses of socialist realism and underlined the importance of efficiency and economy in constructions.[52] The state also became gradually interested in historic preservation. Thus, the 661/1955 Decision of the Council of Ministers made the demolition of cultural monuments illegal without the Council's approval.[53] This was also probably do to economic reasons, as

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[48] Alexandru Budișteanu, Arhiva de istorie orală a Centrului Internațional de Studii asupra Comunismului din cadrul Memorialului Victimelor Comunismului și al Rezistenței de la Sighet (AIOCIMS), interview no. 2455 by Gabriel Catalan, 6 May 2007.
[49] Ioan, *Modern Architecture*, 99.
[50] Ioan, *Power, Play, and National Identity*, 63-64.
[51] ANR, SANIC, fond Consiliul de Miniștri. Stenograme 1944-1959, file 9/1953, 238.
[52] Carmen Popescu, "Looking West: Emulation and Limitation in Romanian Architectural Discourse," *The Journal of Architecture* 14, no. 1 (2009): 109-110.
[53] Daniel Barbu, Radu Ciuceanu, Octavian Roske, "Condiția monumentului sub regimul comunist (l)" [The condition of the historical monument under the communist regime (1)], *Arhivele totalitarismului*, 1-2 (2000): 219.

illustrated by the criticism against socialist realism. This shift towards functionality later became a key feature of the first part of Ceaușescu's rule.

The rediscovering of modern architecture went hand in hand with the re-emergence of nationalism in the official discourse on architecture. Hence, folk architecture started to be discussed in *Arhitectura*.[54] but the regime gradually proved that it was more interested in the stripped classicism or the Carol II style of the 1930s. For example, a 1957 article from *Arhitectura*, signed by the young architect Mihail Caffé, attempted to theorize a modern national architecture: "We should not always refer to the adoption of forms that became traditional in folk and historical architecture. On the contrary, architecture must be primarily modern, contemporary, to be truly national."[55] The article later clarifies that the starting point should be the constructions of the interwar period: "in order to create a national architecture, in the socialist system (...) we must start from the most realistic and successful works of some of our architects who created between the two wars."[56] A possible outcome of the regime's nationalism is the construction of the Palace Hall (1959-1960), which recalls the classical elements previously used by Marcu for the Victory Palace (Fig. 1.8.).[57]

While the 1930s-stripped classicism was re-emerging under communism, the neo-Romanian style was rejected by the architects of the regime. The same Mihail Caffé criticized Mincu's national style for the pointless amplification

Fig. 1.8. Palace Hall.
Source: Armand Rosenthal. Agerpres Archive.

[54] Radu Crăiceanu, "Case noi în Valea Jaleşului," [New houses in the Jaleş Valley] *Arhitectura R.P.R*, no. 9 (1957): 36.
[55] Mihail Caffé, "Despre câteva probleme actuale ale arhitecturii" [About some current issues of architecture], *Arhitectura R.P.R*, no. 9 (1957): 53,
[56] Ibid.
[57] Augustin Ioan, *Power, Play, and National Identity*, 134.

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of folk and religious elements.[58] The neo-Romanian style was faced with this type of criticism also before the war. But Caffé also used arguments against the neo-Romanian style that might as well be applied to the stripped classicism that he embraced:

> This monumentality was meant to express an ideology, a class position; it became the expression of the narrow nationalism and bourgeois-landlord domination, and we can say that through its falsity, arrogance and decadent decorativism, is an architecture that expresses quite well the class for which it was conceived. Without their will, the authors of these edifices revealed all the vices of the Romanian capitalist system, embedded in architectural vices.[59]

By the end of the Gheorghiu-Dej period, the communist regime made significant steps towards reviving the interwar ideas and projects. The interwar conflicting discourses on preservation and a new national architecture were also revived, although the care for the architectural heritage was probably stimulated by economic reasons.

1.3. Preservation and national architecture under Ceaușescu

Nicolae Ceaușescu continued the policies of his predecessor in terms of moving Romanian communism towards nationalism, although differences can be observed. As noted by both Olteanu and Iuga, the first years of Ceaușescu's regime were characterized by a rather preservationist approach towards architecture and urban planning.[60] However, the new party general secretary even increased the preservationist measures and his discourse was soft on traditional architecture. Moreover, the monumentality promoted during the first decades of communism was notably absent from Ceaușescu's discourses. The new general secretary even criticized the "megalomaniac" style of some buildings, while also stressing the failure of the architects to produce economic and functional buildings.[61] In a similar manner, Ceaușescu deplored the tendency for monumentality manifested sometimes by the architects, which led

[58] Mihail Caffé, *Arhitectul Ion Mincu* [The architect Ion Mincu] (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1960), 216.
[59] Ibid., 219.
[60] Mihai Olteanu, "Sistematizarea urbană," 902-906. Liliana Iuga "Reshaping the historic city under socialism: state preservation, urban planning and the politics of scarcity in Romania (1945-1977)" (PhD diss., Central European University, 2017), 102-113.
[61] Octav Doicescu, "Probleme ale arhitecturii noastre actuale" [Problems of our current architecture], *Arhitectura*, no. 2 (1967): 3.

to expensive constructions.[62] It is thus surprising that, in the first part of his rule, Ceaușescu did not show the desire for monumental architecture reflected in both the interwar debates and the first decades of communism.

But although he opposed monumentality in constructions, Ceaușescu did not neglect the topic of tradition in architecture. Hence, he repeatedly stressed the importance of using both modern and traditional elements in constructions. In 1971 at the Third Conference of the Union of Architects, he stated the following: "The rich and valuable traditions of Romanian architecture, our national specificity, have often been neglected. However, we believe that modern architecture cannot ignore the national traditions, of what is characteristic of the spirit and sensitivity of the respective nation."[63]

During the 1972 Mangalia meeting on the systematization of the national territory, Ceaușescu made similar statements. Thus, he underlined his preference for new residential and socio-cultural buildings that would combine Romanian architectural traditions with the modern principles of creating simple buildings.[64] Such statements can easily be compared with the emerging architectural language of post-modernism, although it is unlikely that this was the intention of the Romanian general secretary. Nevertheless, Ceaușescu's desire for a combination of traditional elements of architecture with modernism later played a decisive role in the implementation of the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center project.

Along with demands for a combination of tradition with modernism in constructions and the criticism of monumentality, Ceaușescu also attempted to increase the regime's preservationist measures. Regarding the architectural heritage, he required the enhancement

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[62] "Raport la conferința a III-a a Uniunii Arhitecților din Replublica Socialistă România prezentat de tovarășul Pompiliu Macovei" [Report at the 3rd Conference of the Union of Architects of the Socialist Republic of Romania presented by architect Pompiliu Macovei], *Scânteia*, 5 March 1971, 6.
[63] "Cuvântarea tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu" [The speech of comrad Nicolae Ceaușescu], *Scânteia*, 5 March 1971, 3.
[64] "Stenograma ședinței de lucru de la Mangalia - nord la care s-a discutat sistematizarea teritoriului, 18 iunie 1972" [Minutes of the working session from Mangalia - North during which the systematization of the territory was discussed, 18 June 1972], ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, file 70/1972, 76.

and preservation of the particularities that highlight the individuality of each city and of the historical monuments.[65] Ceaușescu justified his position in the following way: "there have been quite beautiful 300 years old buildings, which are quite good and now we want to turn everything upside down."[66] Starting with 1975, widening or disbanding existing streets, as well as creating new ones, was regulated by law, approval through presidential decree being required.[67] During the first part of Ceaușescu's leadership, the state broadly continued to be interested in heritage and national-modern architecture.

In 1975 Ceaușescu also delivered specific directives for several cities. The main principles were however the same. Regarding Bucharest, the architects received the task to maintain the specificity of the city as it previously developed and to "harmonize the future buildings with the existing ones."[68] In the same manner, the new buildings from cities previously dominated by national minorities, such as Cluj-Napoca and Brașov, or mainly inhabited by Hungarians, Miercurea Ciuc, had to illustrate the specificity of the local architecture.[69] This emphasis on local specificity should be seen from Ceaușescu's economic perspective. Hence, besides requesting cheap and functional constructions, Ceaușescu was also concerned about the housing problems generated by demolitions. In 1966 for example,

[65] Ibid., 38.
[66] "Stenograma ședinței de constituire a Comisiei pentru elaborarea normelor de sistematizare a străzilor din ziua de 29 august 1975" [Minutes of the meeting for the establisment of the Commission for the elaboration of the street systemization rules of 29 August 1975], ANR, SANIC, Fond Comitetul pentru Problemele Consiliilor Populare, Direcția de Sistematizare, Proiectare și Construcții [Popular Councils Affairs Committee, Systematization, Planning and Construction Division], file 208/1975, 3.
[67] *Lege nr. 37 din 26 noiembrie 1975 privind sistematizarea, proiectarea şi realizarea arterelor de circulaţie în localităţile urbane şi rurale* [Law no. 37 of 26 November 1975 on the systematization, planning and construction of thoroughfares in urban and rural areas], Buletinul Oficial [*Official Journal*], no. 82 from 6 September 1978, http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/173522.
[68] "Tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu a examinat ieri cu specialiștii și edilii Capitalei sistematizarea și dezvoltarea în perspectivă a Bucureștiului" [Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu has examined yesterday along with the experts and mayors of the Capital the systematization and future development of Bucharest], *Scânteia*, 25 February 1975, 1.
[69] "Hotărâri ale C.C. al P.C.R. însoțite de indicațiile date de Nicolae Ceaușescu privind sistematizarea municipiilor, orașelor și zonelor industriale din țară" [Decisions of CC of PCR accompanied by the directives given by Nicolae Ceaușescu regarding the systematization of the municipalities, towns and industrial areas of the country], ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Economică, file 60/1975, 48, 49, 101.

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he used the housing problems from Galați as an argument against demolitions.[70] Furthermore, Ceaușescu's desire to preserve the existing heritage and street network was influenced by what he witnessed abroad:

> It happened more than once that, wanting to build something, we do everything again, we demolish many existing constructions. I was in France (...) and I saw how people solved these things. They build a block of 15 - 20 - 30 floors, and next there are small houses, worse that the ones from Pitești, and no one wants to demolish them to make another block. We have this belief that if we want to build something, we must demolish everything, and the architects must do everything new.[71]

Ceaușescu also gave Rome as an example for successfully maintaining the dense street network.[72] Ceaușescu's desire for traditional Romanian elements of architecture in the new construction was thus paralleled by an inclination to preserve the existing heritage, regardless of the region.

Although Ceaușescu's support for preservation was justified by economic reasons, he never indicated that the old should prevail.[73] Moreover, by 1976 a change in the initial preservationist policy could be observed. Ceaușescu's guidelines for two of the historical boulevards of Cluj-Napoca, Budai Nagy Antal and Lenin, today Dorobanților and 21 December 1989, required "the improving of the architectural treatment inspired by Romanian traditions." [74] This was a significant shift since maintaining the architectural feature of the city, heavily influenced by the Habsburg and Austro-Hungarian past, was no longer a priority. Furthermore, the President became more lenient regarding demolitions. Hence, his guidelines

[70] Miruna Stroe, *Locuirea între proiect și decizie politică. România 1954-1966* [Housing between design project and political decision. Romania 1954-1966] (Bucharest: Simetria, 2015), 112.
[71] "Stenograma întîlnirii tovarăşului Nicolae Ceauşescu cu conducerea Uniunii arhitecţilor şi cadre de răspundere din domeniul proiectării şi sistematizării" [Minutes of comrade Nicolae Ceauşescu's meeting with the leadership of the Union architects and responsible staff from the field of designing and systematization], ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Economică, file no. 47/1970, 39.
[72] ANR, SANIC, Fond Comitetul pentru Problemele Consiliilor Populare, Direcția de Sistematizare, Proiectare și Construcții, file 208/1975, 4.
[73] Iuga, "Reshaping the historic city under socialism," 110.
[74] "Indicațiile date de tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu, secretar general al Partidului Comunist Român, cu privire la schițele de sistematizare ale municipiilor, orașelor, stațiunilor balneo-climatice și viitoarele centre urbane din județul Cluj - decembrie 1976" [The directives given by comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, secretary general of the Romanian Communist Party, on the systematization sketches of the municipalities, cities, the spa resorts and the future urban centers from Cluj county - December 1976], ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Economică, file no. 20/1977, 22.

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for December 1976 and January 1977 contain numerous approvals for demolitions in Bucharest and provincial cities to make room for new residential buildings.[75] The initial reluctance to destroy older buildings for constructing new ones was seemingly started to be abandoned.

To sum up urban planning and architectural ideas in twentieth century Romania witnessed contradictory discourses on national architecture, monumentality and preservation. These contradictions were particularly visible in the ideas promoted by the interwar modernists, the royal dictatorship and the Gheorghiu-Dej regime. National architecture and preservation were present also in Ceaușescu discourse, but in a way that stands apart from both interwar and early communist ideas. During the first part of Ceaușescu's rule, the new constructions had to reflect the local specificities and demolitions were discouraged, while the discourse on national and monumental architecture was put aside. However, around the end of 1976 and the beginning of 1977, Ceaușescu's suggestions started to be focused on promoting Romanian architecture, while the initial reluctance to carry out demotions was gradually abandoned. This was the moment when Ceaușescu's position towards architecture started to change.

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[75] See ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Economică, file no. 60/1975.

Chapter 2. Nationalism and the construction of the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center

In this chapter I analyze the drawing of the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center and its implementation. The previous chapter demonstrated that around the end of 1976 Ceaușescu seemingly started to abandon his initial desire to preserve the existing heritage. On the other hand, this chapter argues that the 1977 discussions concerning the construction of a new communist center in Bucharest signaled the re-emergence of monumentality in the official discourses on architecture. Thus, I demonstrate that Ceaușescu's shift from preservation and functionalism to a national-monumental architecture makes the 1980s developments stand apart from the pre-communist debates and the Gheorghiu-Dej regime. The interwar period and the first decades of communism exhibited an ambivalent stance towards preservation and national and monumental architecture.

But although the decision-making process was in the hands of Ceaușescu, the architectural vision was put into practice by the architects of the regime. Hence, the chapter analyzes also the role of architects in elaborating the Political-Administrative Center project, as well as the role of the 1935 master plan. As already mentioned, the recent scholarship underlines also the contribution of the architects, at least at the beginning, in planning the new center of Bucharest. Thus, the subsequent disregarding of the plans drawn by experienced architects became an important way of explaining the destructions carried out. However, this chapter shows that in contrast to his predecessors, the Romanian President made little use of the experienced architects in drawing the Political-Administrative Center project. This in turn contributed to the difficulties in understanding the new national architecture envisioned by Ceaușescu for the new center, thus setting the stage for the demolition of important parts of the city.

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The first subchapter analyzes the origins of the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center. The second subchapter follows the drawing of the plan for the new communist center, the failure of the experienced architects to impose their view and the gradual monopolization of the decision-making process by Ceaușescu. The chapter concludes by analyzing the result of Ceaușescu's will to impose a national-monumental architecture.

2.1. The origins of the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center

In order to explain the construction of the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center project, scholars have tried to identify the origins of this idea. In this regard, one of the most disputed aspects of the construction of Ceaușescu's center is its supposed reliance on Korean and Chinese models. Many scholars subscribe to the thesis that there was an influence of these Asian models on the architecture of Bucharest.[76] Party archives also demonstrate that Ceaușescu did indeed send a delegation of architects, artists and engineers to Korea in August-September 1978.[77] The trip occurred in the early stages of the competition for the Political-Administrative Center, and the architects that travelled to Asia were Alexandru Budișteanu, Ascanio Damian and Anca Petrescu.[78] According to Budișteanu, the former chief architect of Bucharest, Ceaușescu wanted the architects to see how a ruler is worshiped.[79] However, the belief that Ceaușescu's cult of personality was inspired by his visits to China and North Korea in June 1971 has been recently contradicted by party archives. Hence, the dictator's trip to Asia only convinced him of the necessity of implementing the already elaborated plan for a

[76] Alexandru Panaitescu, *De la Casa Scânteii la Casa Poporului* [From the Spark's House to the People's House] (Bucharest: Simeria, 2012). Celac, „O analiză comparată a limbajului totalitar." Renata Salecl, *(Per) versions of Love and Hate*.
[77] "Raport cu privire la vizita de documentare tehnică a delegației de arhitecți, ingineri și artiști plastici, efectuată în perioada 20 august - 5 septembrie a.c. în Republica Populară Democrată Coreeană și Republica Populară Chineză" [Report on the technical documentation visit of the delegation of architects, engineers and plastic artists, conducted between 20 August and 5 September this year in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of China], ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație [Propaganda and Agitation, Department], file no. 15/1978, 2.
[78] Alexandru Budișteanu, *Între istorie şi judecata posterităţii, Alexandru Budişteanu în dialog cu Flori Bălănescu* [Between history and the posterity judgment, Alexandru Budișteanu in dialogue with Flori Bălanescu] (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Naţional pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2010), 367.
[79] Ibid., 127.

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cultural revolution.[80] Thus, it appears that the regime was indeed observing the Asian developments, although it was not necessarily implementing them. Moreover, Pyongyang itself was heavily influenced by the Soviet model, more precisely by the blueprints of cities such as Moscow and Minsk.[81]

It is thus probably more efficient to compare the Political-Administrative Center with other similar European projects. According to architect Nicolae Vlădescu, Ceaușescu knew about the similar German, Italian or Soviet planning projects.[82] Hence, it is possible that the Romanian President was inspired by these plans as well, although it is not known to what degree. One such examples is the Leningrad House of the Soviets, built between 1936 and 1941. The Leningrad plan is considered to be close to the choices for Bucharest in the 1980s because of its position outside the traditional center and the similarities between the two palaces in terms of style and shape.[83]

Also referring to the European context, Ioan sees a connection between Ceaușescu's project and fascist planning. [84] This is a plausible thesis, considering the interwar attempts to illustrate the Latinity of the nation through architecture. Thus, Ioan regards the Latin elements present in Ceaușescu's national communism as a key component of the regime's view of architecture. The party did indeed gradually remove the role given to the Slavic element in the history of the Romanians and rehabilitate the previously omitted Latin origin. Hence, in 1968, the regions were replaced with the former interwar county-type administrative organization. The seats of the counties received the rank of *muncipium*, and two of them even

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[80] "Stenogramă a ședinței Comitetului Executiv al C.C. al P.C.R. privind vizita delegației de partid și guvernamentale a R. S. România, condusă de Nicolae Ceaușescu, în țările socialiste din Asia: R. P. Chineză, R. D. Vietnam și R. P. Mongolă" [Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee of CC of PCR regarding the visit of the party and governmental delegation of the SR Romania, led by Nicolae Ceaușescu in the socialist countries from Asia: Chinese PR, DR Vietnam and Mongolian PR], in Romulus Ioan Budura, *Relațiile româno-chineze 1880-1974* [The Romanian-Chineese relations, 1880-1974] (Bucharest, 2005), 1081.
[81] Chris Springer, *Pyongyang: The Hidden History of the North Korean Capital* (Budapest: Entente, 2003), 23-24.
[82] Ioana Iosa, *Bucarest. L'emblème d'une nation* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011), 176.
[83] Popa, "Restructuring and Envisioning Bucharest," 188-189.
[84] See Ioan, *Modern Architecture*, 185-198.

suffered a name change meant to reflect their Roman origin. Thus, Turnu-Severin became Drobeta Turnu-Severin in 1972 and later in 1974 Cluj received the name Cluj-Napoca. According to Ioan, the civic centers of these municipalities were meant to be the equivalents of the Roman forums, or more precisely of their fascist versions. The new Brescia center constructed by Piacentini is given as an example. This thesis is further strengthened by the apparent initial reliance for the communist center on the 1935 master plan. The main source of inspiration for the Ceaușescu regime would have thus been Mussolini's Italy.

Although affinities with the fascist model do exist, there is too little evidence to support the Latin inheritance.[85] Furthermore, in spite of the symbolic importance of the civic centers for the regime, these communist centers do not seem to follow a clearly established pattern. Thus, while in Bucharest the contradiction between the existing heritage, especially religious buildings, was solved through demolitions, this was not necessarily the case in the rest of the country. For example, the old center of Oradea survived the Ceaușescu period, since the communist center was built outside the main square, in a rather peripherical zone of the city. The Satu Mare civic center on the other hand was build using folk elements.[86] The use of tradition was indeed one of Ceaușescu's requirements for the new constructions, but the architecture of the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center differs significantly from the projects carried out in the rest of the country. Other cities even escaped this communist architectural project, including the biggest Transylvanian city, Cluj-Napoca. Thus, the new political administrative Center of Bucharest stands apart from the other centers constructed throughout the country.

It seems however that Ceaușescu wanted a new center for Bucharest that would illustrate the intertwinement between his cult and nationalism. It is also possible that he

[85] Alex Răuță, *Negocierea centrului civic: arhitecţi şi politicieni în România scolului XX = Negotiating the civic center: architects and politicians in the 20th century Romania* (Bucharest: Editura Universitară "Ion Mincu," 2013), 17. Bilingual.
[86] Ioan, *Power, Play, and National Identity*, 155.

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intended to shift the focus from the Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej square (the former Royal Palace Square) to a center that would be his own creation.[87] One source even claims that the Romanian President enjoyed being compared to baron Haussmann.[88] Regarding the role of Ceaușescu's cult in the construction of the Political-Administrative Center, the following quotation is suggestive: "I want the symbolic representation of the two decades of enlightenment that we have just lived, I need something grand, something very grand, just like what we have already achieved!"[89] As the mayor of Bucharest, Gheorghe Pana, stated, Ceaușescu desired "the building of a modern, thriving capital, worthy of the light epoch that we live in and which we proudly call the 'Ceaușescu Period.'"[90] The new political-administrative center was also meant to reflect a radical break with the previous ways of doing architecture in Romania: "a unique epochal achievement, not only in the history of Bucharest, but also of our country."[91] Thus, the new center of Bucharest offered the perfect context for experimenting a new national architecture, as demonstrated in the following section.

2.2. Planning a new communist center

Following the March 1977 earthquake that devastated the capital, Ceaușescu informed the architects about his desire to construct a new political-administrative center. The chosen solution was eventually the Spirea Hill. Plans for a political center in the area were not new, since the 1935 master plan also suggested the construction of the interwar parliament on the hill. Furthermore, just like in the 1935 plan, the early projects for the communist political-administrative center linked the new construction to the Senate Square, today the United Nations Square, through a thoroughfare.[92] However, it remains unclear how and when did

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[87] See also Popa, "Restructuring and Envisioning Bucharest," 262-263.
[88] Lionel Duroy, "Ubu architecte a Bucarest," *Architecture d'aujourd'hui,* February 1989, 11.
[89] Christophe Nick, "Il Detruit Le Coeur de Sa Ville," *Actuel,* 19 November 1985, 88.
[90] "Stenograma şedinţei Plenare a C.C. al P.C.R. 27 iunie 1984" [Minutes of the Plenary meeting of the CC of PCR 27 June 1984], ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, file no. 41/1984, 54.
[91] "Probleme ale dezvoltării prezente şi de perspectivă a Capitalei. Convorbiri cu dr. arh. Alexandru Budișteanu," *Arhitectura*, no. 1-2 (1980).
[92] Ştefan Lungu, "O chestiune de morală?" *Arhitectura*, no. 1-4 (1996): 5.

Ceaușescu decide to rely on it for his center. Placing the House of the Republic on the Spirea Hill, as in the interwar plan for a parliament, was not apparently the initial goal. Constantin Jugurică, technical director of the *Proiect București* construction company and two other important names of Romanian architecture, Octav Doicescu and Cezar Lăzărescu, had an unofficial meeting with the presidential couple shortly after the earthquake. Hence, according to Jugurică, the initial plan was to build the palace on Știrbei Vodă, about 1 km from today's location.[93] However, during the 10 March 1977 meeting of the Executive Political Committee, the President announced the construction of the new political center on either the Plevna street or in Victory Square.[94] The architects were not invited to this meeting. These initial suggestions illustrate that the interwar plan was not used from the beginning for the communist redesign of Bucharest.

The announcement that the Spirea Hill would become the construction site for the new political administrative center came on 22 March, during Ceaușescu's meeting with the architects. This was the point when the project was moving towards the 1935 master plan. It is not clear however in what conditions did Ceaușescu agree to rely on it for the new center. Radio Free Europe suggested that behind this idea was in fact Alexandru Budișteanu.[95] Architect Augustin Ioan on the other hand argued that in fact Jugurică would have showed the project directly to Ceaușescu. But as the previous chapter shows, the ideas of the 1935 master plan continued to be used also under communism. A discussion between Ceaușescu and Octav Doicescu, an interwar modernist, reveals that Ceaușescu was aware of the reliance

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[93] Constantin Jugurică, AIOCIMS, interview no. 1587 by Raluca Popa, 16 and 25 February 2003. Știrbei Vădă was later used for building another colossal building, the never-finished Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania.
[94] "Protocol nr. 10 al ședinței Comitetului Politic Executiv, din ziua de 10 martie 1977" [Protocol no. 10 of the meeting of the Executive Political Committee from 10 March 1977], ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, file no. 28/1977, 13.
[95] Virgil Ierunca, "Studiu despre demolarile din București apărut în L'Alternative" [Study on the demolitions from Bucharest published in L'Alternative], radio show "Povestea Vorbii," no. 389, Broadcasting department, 6 March 1985, 6. HU OSA 300-60-1: 147/1; Culture: Patrimonium, 1985; Subject Files; Romanian Unit; RFE/RL RI.

on the 1935 ideas.[96] Thus, Ceaușescu knew about the reliance on the interwar plan. The subsequent changes from the interwar plan, such as the moving of the boulevard towards the Unification Square (*Piața Unirii*), are generally regarded as the main sources of the destruction of the city's heritage.[97] But the new political center was directly inspired by an interwar plan with a desire for monumental buildings and grand boulevards and squares that would have also clashed with the existing heritage.

Furthermore, apart from the short socialist realist period in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the main source of inspiration for Romanian architects was Le Corbusier.[98] Considering Le Corbusier's preference for monumentality to the detriment of the old city, it is not surprising that when the demolitions in Bucharest started, the architects thought they were doing the right think for the city.[99] The architects of the 1970s also seemed to share Marcel Iancu's earlier desire for an iron hand that would facilitate the implementation of their projects, seeing in Ceaușescu a possible solution, the madman capable of triggering the energies that the project required.[100] Thus, even in the initial phases of the plan, the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center project could have endangered the city's architectural heritage.

As mentioned earlier, a change can be observed towards the end of 1976 in Ceaușescu's discourse regarding preservation and national architecture. Hence, it is probably not a surprise that during one of the first meetings with the architects following the earthquake, Ceaușescu envisioned a radical plan for the reconstruction of Bucharest. Regarding the style of the new political administrative center, tradition was no longer the sole

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[96] "Stenograma ședinței de lucru cu colectivul de construcții și sistematizare - 7 aprilie 1977" [Minutes of the working session with the construction and systematization team - 7 April 1977], ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Agrară [Agrarian department], file no. 7/1977, 7.
[97] Ștefan Lungu, AIOCIMS, interview no. 1528 by Raluca Popa, 2 July 2002.
[98] Alexandru Beldiman, AIOCIMS, interview no. 1500 by Raluca Popa, 14 June 2002.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Lungu, "O chestiune de morală?" 5.

component: “I am thinking of an architecture that would combine also the Romanian architecture, not only the old one, but also new elements of architecture, of course, using the modern elements of construction and architecture.”[101] Furthermore, the existing constructions could now fall in order to make room for the new center: “we should not bother that buildings need to be demolished, rather, a systematization must be done (...) as if nothing was here, as if you would be working on an empty area.”[102] Also, the historically important Uranus street could be disregarded if necessary. There was no longer a concern for preserving the architectural heritage. Thus, the project for a new center was destructive from the beginning.

Cezar Lăzărescu was the only architect present at the meeting who tried to temper the ambitions of the President: “We maintain what has already been constructed and the functional needs of the city.”[103] The same meeting emphasized Ceauşescu’s concerns regarding Romanian architecture: how could it be applied to buildings with six-seven levels?[104] The national architecture desired by Ceaușescu for the Political-Administrative Center thus had the same problem as the interwar attempts to create a national style, namely the difficulty of reflecting the monumentality of secular-administrative buildings.

Some architects decided not to get involved because of Ceaușescu’s radical ideas. Mircea Alifanti was one of those architects. He later justified his decision by arguing that it was impossible to do good architecture under Ceaușescu.[105] Another architect that refused the presidential invitation was Șerban Popescu-Criveanu.[106] He seemed to have noticed from the very beginning that the construction of the House of the Republic was a personal affair. The architects’ fears were confirmed on 1 December 1977, when the National Cultural Heritage

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[101] “Stenograma ședinței de lucru ținută de tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu cu arhitecți și constructori” [Minutes of the working meeting held by comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu with architects and constructors], ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Economică, file no. 41/1977, 2.
[102] Ibid., 3.
[103] Ibid., 7.
[104] Ibid., 11.
[105] Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul communist. România 1944-1989* [Architecture in the Communist Project. Romania 1944-1989] (Bucharest: Simeria, 2011), 85. Bilingual.
[106] Popa, “Restructuring and Envisioning Bucharest,” 406, note 393.

Directorate was disbanded through the State Council's 442/1977 decree.[107] This action along with Ceaușescu's growing involvement in architectural matters would later leave Bucharest's historical monuments helpless in the face of the demolitions.

Nevertheless, according to Budișteanu, most of the architects took part in the contest in order to remain in history as authors of the project, being willing to make all the required concessions.[108] Moreover, Ceaușescu initially accepted the proposal of Ascanio Damian, former rector of the Ion Mincu School of Architecture, to organize teams of architects that would propose different systematization projects.[109] This was seen by the architects as a sign that they could influence the project. Some perceived the prospect of a new urban plan as a way of solving the city's problems.[110] We do not know the names of all the participating experts at the 22 March meeting, but it appears that younger architects were also invited. This aspect would later be relevant for the outcome of the competition. Around 17 teams of architects participated in the first phase of the Political-Administrative Center project. Thus, the architects hoped that they could negotiate with the party and influence the project.

It shortly became clear however that Ceaușescu's reliance on the architects' ideas was limited. Hence, Ceaușescu, personally decided that it would be best to construct the palace on the highest point of the Spirea Hill and move the boulevard south, towards the Unification Square.[111] Such a move meant a significant extension of the Political-Administrative Center, which required the destruction of a larger area. Eventually the boulevard was extended beyond the Unification Square. Both Popa and Lungu argue that these changes probably occurred around the end of the 1970s.[112] However a close look at the systematization project proposed

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[107] *Decretul nr. 442/1977 privind organizarea și funcționarea Consiliului Culturii și Educației Socialiste*, Buletinul Oficial, 28 November 1977, http://lege5.ro/Gratuit/he2tqmrx/decretul-nr-442-1977-privind-organizarea-si-functionarea-consiliului-culturii-si-educatiei-socialiste/2.
[108] Budișteanu, *Între istorie și judecata posterității*, 132.
[109] ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Economică, file no. 41/1977, 7, 11.
[110] Ștefan Lungu, AIOCIMS.
[111] Lungu, "O chestiune de morală?" 6.
[112] Popa, "Restructuring and Envisioning Bucharest," 254-255. Lungu, "O chestiune de morală?" 6.

by Anca Petrescu in June 1977 and the final systematization plan reveals that the Victory of Socialism Boulevard was already pointed towards the Unification Square in mid-1977 (Fig. 2.1., Fig. 2.2.). However, in this initial phase, the boulevard was ending about 1 km away from the Unification Square and about 2 km from the palace. The most significant change to the boulevard probably occurred in 1986, when it was decided that it will be extended about 940 meters.[113] The boulevard is today about 3 km long, surpassing the Champs-Elysées. Hitler also wanted for Berlin a boulevard greater than the Parisian model: "The Champs-Elysées is three hundred and thirty feet wide. In any case we'll make our avenue seventy-odd feet wider."[114] Ceaușescu was thus not the only dictator who tried to copy the Parisian boulevard.

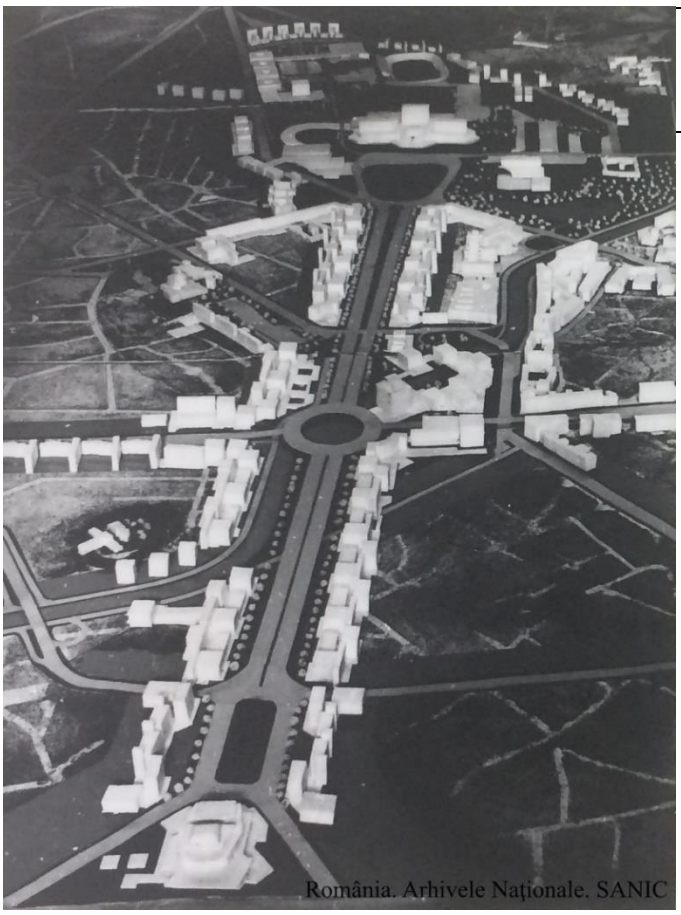

Fig. 2.1. Project Anca Petrescu team June 1977.
Source: ANR, SANIC, Colecția Documente Fotografice, album no. 222, 2, photo 3.

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[113] "Nota referitoare la proiectul de decret privind aprobarea măsurilor pentru realizarea unor obiective de investiții în zona noului centru civic al municipiului București" [Note on the draft decree regarding the approving of measures for achieving investment objectives in the new civic center area of the Bucharest municipality], ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Economică, file no. 527/1986, 8.
[114] *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs by Albert Speer*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (The Macmillan company: 1970), 76.

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Fig. 2.2. Final systematization project
Source: ANR, SANIC, Colecția Documente Fotografice, album no. 222, 15, photo 44.

Another deviation seemingly overlooked was the change of the statute of the Union of Romanian Architects. The modifications were submitted to Ceaușescu for approval in December 1978 and were signed by Cezar Lăzărescu, the president of the union. A major change to the statute concerned the role of the union. Hence, according to the original statute dating from 1971, "The Union of Architects fulfills the role of specialized organ of the party and state leadership in the field of architecture and systematization."[115] The new statute on the other hand changed the formulation "specialized organ" to "consultative specialized organ." This change signaled the fact that the Union of Architects could no longer make decisions on behalf of the party in the fields of architecture and systematization. Shifting these responsibilities towards the central committee meant that the decision-making process was now in the hands of Ceaușescu. These changes probably determined many architects to abandon the competition.

[115] "Raport cu privire la modificarea unor prevederi ale Statutului Uniunii Arhitecților" [Report regarding the modification of certain provisions of the Statute of the Union of Architects], ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, file no. 27/1978, 6.

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Ceaușescu's monopolization of power was further facilitated by a competition within the architectural community. Taking advantage of his position as rector of the architectural school and president of the architects' union, the same Lăzărescu obliged the team formed by other two prominent architects, Octav Doicescu and Alexandru Iotzu, to abandon the competition at the beginning of 1981.[116] The final systematization plan was however a combination of the solutions proposed by Lăzărescu, and a younger architect, Anca Petrescu.[117] The project was gradually drawn in accordance with the desires of the President and the competition for the Political-Administrative Center was coming to an end.

The next important phase of the project was the contest for the House of the Republic, initially won by Cezar Lăzărescu.[118] The choice was not a surprise, considering the fact that Lăzărescu was regarded as the architect of the regime, being appreciated by both Ceaușescu and his predecessor, Gheorghiu-Dej.[119] Lăzărescu did not enjoy however full support from his colleagues and, following the criticism received from other architects, Ceaușescu agreed to organize a new competition for the palace.[120] The final verdict came from Ceaușescu, and was entirely against Lăzărescu's calculations, since the President appointed in 1981 Anca Petrescu as chief architect of the House of the Republic.

The reasons behind the appointment of Petrescu are still debated. Common ways of explaining the young architect's success are her connections to the youngest son of the President, Nicu, the name coincidence (Petrescu was also the maiden name of Elena Ceaușescu) as well as her ambition to take part in the contest. But the first official meeting Ceaușescu had with the architects after the earthquake is also suggestive, since it illustrates the President's desire to involve also the younger architects. After all, Lăzărescu also became

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[116] Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul communist,* 127.
[117] Keno Verschek, "Construirea Casei Poporului - un efort naţional enorm şi creativ. Interviu cu Anca Petrescu," *Arhitectura*, no. 1-4 (1996): 56.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Alexandru Budișteanu, AIOCIMS.
[120] Verschek, "Construirea Casei Poporului," 57.

Gheorghiu-Dej's favorite architect and "personal stylist" when he was young.[121] Lăzărescu could also have been a victim of Ceaușescu's campaign of removing the staff of his predecessor.

A more recent interpretation of Anca Petrescu's success belongs to Popa. Hence, she argues that there was a generational struggle taking place within the community of architects.[122] Since they were educated in communism, the new architects were more willing to compromise with the party leadership. Considering the training of Romanian architects in modern architecture, the construction of the Political-Administrative Center was seen as an opportunity to experiment the use of columns, volutes and consoles.[123] The generational struggle is confirmed also by archival documents. By 1981, only the projects of Anca Petrescu and Cezar Lăzărescu remained in the competition for the palace. During a meeting with the architects, Ceaușescu openly criticized Budișteanu for praising Lăzărescu's project for the House of the Republic and not the project of the youth, led by Anca Petrescu.[124] This desire of the communist authorities to involve younger architects was not new. In a similar way Gheorghiu-Dej also wanted young architects to contribute to the systematization plan for Bucharest.[125]

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[121] Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul communist,* 117.
[122] See Popa, "Restructuring and Envisioning Bucharest," 256.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Budișteanu was dissatisfied with the grand architecture proposed by Petrescu: "The project presented by the team led by comrade Cezar Lazarescu represents a solid solution and has this advantage compared to the other project in the sense that it is easier to accept as a unitary document. The other one is interesting, but it seems to me a bit kneaded. It does not allow a unitary conception and this feeling of grand architecture..." "Stenograma prezentării unor machete privind Teatrul National si noul Sediu politico-administrativ, care a avut loc pe data de 26 decembrie 1981" [Minutes of the presentation of layouts for the National Theater and the New Political-Administrative Headquarters, which took place on 26 December 1981], ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, file no. 31/1981, 11.
[125] ANR, SANIC, fond Consiliul de Miniștri. Stenograme 1944-1959, file 9/1953, 200.

But the same archive also reveals that Anca Petrescu was apparently chosen chief architect because Ceaușescu believed that her lay-out for the palace had more Romanian elements from the traditional architecture, in contrast to Lăzărescu's project.[126] His observations were however vaguely formulated: "here there is more Romanian style, there are more Romanian elements, from the traditional architecture." Unfortunately, the two projects discussed during Ceaușescu's December 1981 meeting with the architects were not in the archive. However, many of the July 1981 proposed projects do tend to combine monumentality, modernism and Romanian architecture, including the two projects proposed by Anca Petrescu (Fig. 2.3. Fig. 2.4.)[127]

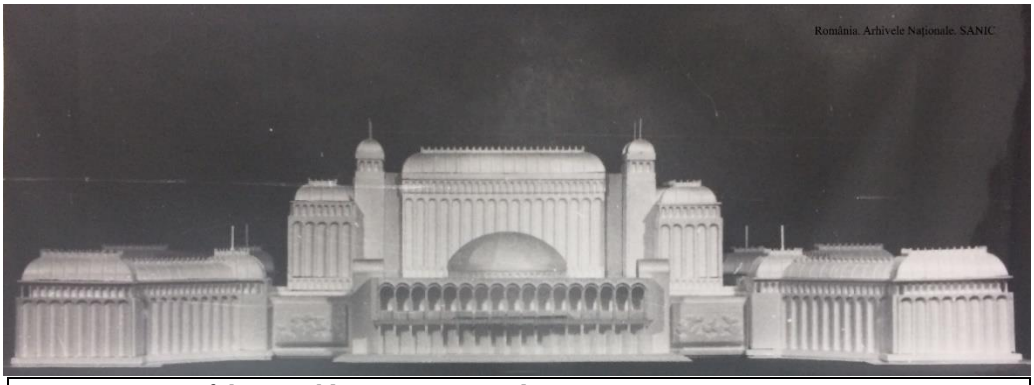

Fig. 2.3. House of the Republic. Version 8 - July 1981.
Source: ANR, SANIC, Colecția Documente Fotografice, album no. 222, 25, photo 76.

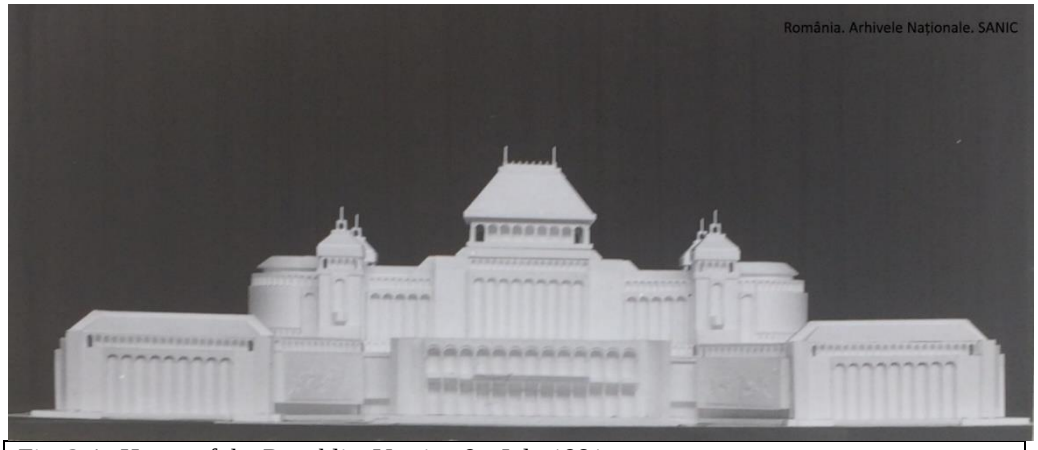

Fig. 2.4. House of the Republic. Version 9 - July 1981.
Source: ANR, SANIC, Colecția Documente Fotografice, album no. 222, 26, photo 78.

[126] ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, file no. 31/1981, 12.
[127] "Studii arhitectură pentru Casa Republicii" [Architecture studies for the House of the Republic], ANR, SANIC, Colecția Documente Fotografice [Photographic Documents Collection], album no. 222, 25-26. The copies of the photos of the July 1981 projects available in SANIC do not indicate the authors. The identification of the authors is based on the *Memorialul Bucureştilor* [Bucharest Memorial] documentary. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5P5ylj70Y4&t=1265s.

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Ceaușescu's remarks from the 1971 Conference of the Union of Architects on the training of students of architecture can also be enlightening:

> I think that attention should be drawn to a certain neglect by our higher school vis-à-vis the duty to cultivate among students the traditions of national architecture, to orientate future architects towards the harmonious blending of the national, popular specificity with the requirements of the modern construction.[128]

As shown in the previous chapter, Ceaușescu repeatedly emphasized his dissatisfaction with the works of the older architects and probably saw Petrescu as a student that could fulfill his requirements for a national architecture. The young architect managed to trick Ceaușescu with her proposal, speculating the President's obscure description of a new national architecture that would combine tradition with modern elements of construction. Ceaușescu thus wanted to be more involved in implementing his vision of a national architecture, in contrast to Gheorghiu-Dej and Carol II who relied on experienced architects such as Petre Antonescu and Duiliu Marcu.

2.3. The consequences of nationalism on the redesign of Bucharest

This ambiguity that surrounded the Romanian architecture Ceaușescu wanted for the Political-Administrative Center further contributed to its antagonism with the architectural features of the city. Searching for an architecture that should be in the same time national, monumental and reflect the achievements of its ruler led to a systematization that endangered the pre-existing constructions. A 1985 tourist map of Bucharest demonstrates Ceaușescu's little interests in preserving the existing heritage by illustrating the size of the area that was exposed to the implementation of the new center (Fig. 2.5.).

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[128] "Cuvântarea tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu" [The speech of comrad Nicolae Ceaușescu], *Scânteia*, 5 March 1971, 3.

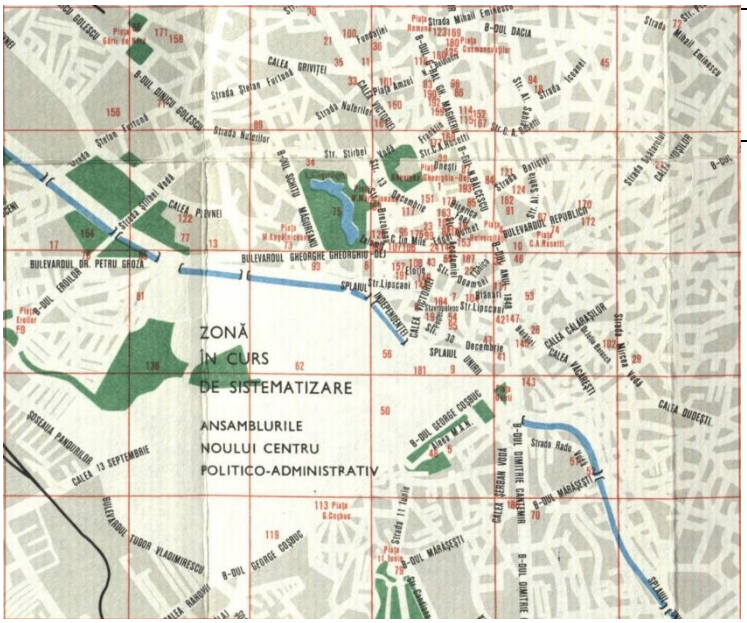

Fig. 2.5. Ștefan Bălan et al., *București. Monografie* (Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1985), *Hartă turistică (zona centrală)* [Turist map (central area)].

The massive scale of the demolitions carried out is thus explainable by the fact that there was a desire for an architectural-urban work without connections to the rest of the city.[129] Similar developments can be seen for example in Fascist Italy. Hence, in Rome, the growing imperial discourse stimulated a conflict between certain architectural periods and the official architectural discourse. The least important period for Mussolini was *Risorgimento* Italy, but Baroque, Renaissance and medieval architecture often had to fall in order to implement the Fascist architectural dream.[130] Regarding Bucharest, buildings in styles ranging from eclectism, neoclassicism and modernism to the national Brâncoveanu and neo-Romanian styles were demolished in order to make room for the new center. Among them were historical monuments such as the Brâncoveanu Hospital, the Văcărești and Mihai Vodă monasteries. The Uranus district was entirely destroyed, while churches were one of the main targets of the demolitions. After the fall of the Ceaușescu regime Anca Petrescu tried to justify these

[129] Alexandru M. Sandu, "Cinci repere de 'putere' pentru ieşirea din diletantismul arhitectural-urbanistic" [Five points of "power" to get out of the architectural-urban dilettantism], in *Miturile comunismului românesc* [The myths of Romanian communism], ed. Lucian Boia (Bucharest: Editura Universităţii Bucureşti, 1995), 217.
[130] Borden W Painter, *Mussolini's Rome: Rebuilding the Eternal City* (New York, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 3.

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demolitions by clamming that she saved the Văcărești Monastery's friezes by copying them in the decoration of the palace.[131] Ceauşescu's urban policy thus reflects a pattern specific to totalitarian regimes in general, devastating for the architectural features that are in contradiction with it.

The Political-Administrative Center represents the failure of Ceaușescu's national communism to exhibit a new national architecture. Not surprisingly, the architecture of the new center was labeled in the Western media as the "Romanian-classic" style.[132] The Romanian architects were also aware of this problem. Hence, in April 1985, a group of architects formed of Romulus Costescu, Romeo Belea, Mihai Enescu, Constantin Frumuzache and Nicolae Vlădescu criticized the architecture of the palace in the following way:

> The components do not form a unit. Rather, it is a heterogeneous composition, a compromise between the classic architecture and the national architecture. Moreover, the idea of a national specificity based on Romanian traditional values is not treated with conviction, which can be explained by the difficulty of using this style for a building of exceptional dimensions.[133]

After 1989 scholars started to agree that these combinations make the Political-Administrative Center reflect a form of post-modern architecture (Fig. 2.6.). The remarks of foreign observers that the Victory of Socialism Boulevard and the Palace itself would be the greatest post-modern intervention in Europe even seemed to bother many Romanian architects.[134] Nevertheless, in several interviews, some architects acknowledged the attempts to use post-modern elements, particularly from the architecture of Catalan architect Ricardo Bofill.[135] Augustin Ioan compared the architectural features of Ceaușescu's center with the characteristics of postmodern architecture.[136] His analysis concluded that common elements

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[131] Ioan, *Modern Architecture*, p. 196, note 12.
[132] Frederic Edelmann, "Le Style 'roumano-classique' du centre de Bucarest. L'architecture en barbarie," *Le Monde*, 15 February 1990. LexisNexis.
[133] Ioana Iosa, *Bucarest. L'emblème d'une nation*, 164-165.
[134] Augustin loan, "Le postmodemisme dans l'architecture: ni sublime, ni completement absent," *Euresis* 1-4 (2009): 145.
[135] Alexandru Beldiman, AIOCIMS. Ștefan Lungu, AIOCIMS.
[136] Ioan, *Modern Architecture*, 195-196.

do exist, such as the praise of the urban façade, the ornaments and composition types, the use of identities and the grouping of eclectic and classical elements. Nevertheless, important post-modernist elements are missing, such as the double encoding, the irony and the code directions that would have suggested the glorification of kitsch mass culture. In a way, the Political-Administrative Center managed to fulfil Ceaușescu's earlier requests for the combination of tradition with modern architecture. Still, the new center illustrates the same problems as the neo-Romanian style and the Carol II style, by reflecting a rather transnational architecture.

Fig. 2.6. House of the Republic.
Source: Simion Mechno. Agerpres foto.

To sum up, the construction of the Bucharest Political-Administrative center represented the culminating point of Ceaușescu's shift from preservation and functionalism to a national-monumental architecture. Nationalism was indeed present in the architectural discourse of all the political systems Romania witnessed in the twentieth century. The 1980s differed however significantly from the previous debates on architecture, signifying the reemergence of monumentality in the official discourse. Thus, Ceaușescu's desire for a national-monumental architecture intertwined with the leader cult was one of the main factors that led to the destruction of important parts of Bucharest, as a result of the implementation of the Political-Administrative Center project.

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Ceaușescu was more involved than his predecessors in drawing the new national architecture and made little use of the experienced architects. This meant an unavoidable antagonism with the previous ways of doing national architecture. The main irreconcilable problem of national communism with the pre-war nation-building concerned the religious aspect of Romanian identity which could no longer be tolerated. Second, while acknowledging the difficulty of making a monumental architecture based on national features, Ceaușescu never seemed to have a clear idea of how such an architecture would look. This in turn led to a contradiction with the existing architectural heritage, regarded as unworthy of the communist dream.

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Chapter 3. Opposition, propaganda and the post-1989 developments

The chapter deals with the opposition to the construction of the new center, the propaganda and the repressive measures carried out by the regime, as well as the post 1989 developments from Bucharest. The oppressive measures taken by the regime are seen as the culminating point of Ceaușescu's change of policy. An analysis of the 1980s protests and of the regime's reaction to criticism is pertinent since, contrasting Ceaușescu's earlier discourses on the necessity to preserve the architectural heritage, the regime now had to justify the demolitions carried out. The chapter also demonstrates that the preventive measure taken by the regime left little room for public discontent and thus further facilitated the implementation of Ceaușescu's national architecture.

The first subchapter analyzes the protests against the systematization from the local population and the intelligentsia, as well as the attitude of the West and of the Romanian diaspora. The second subchapter deals with the response of the regime to the resistance that it encountered, and explains the reasons behind the opposition's failure. Lastly, the chapter looks at the faith of Ceaușescu's center after the fall of communism and the attempts to continue the interwar pattern, primarily through isolating the developments from the 1980s and reviving the religious aspect of Romanian identity, also through architecture.

3.1. Protests abroad and in Romania

Since the national media avoided the discussion of the issue, the Western media was engaged in revealing the consequences of the construction of the Political-Administrative Center. Dissidents and the Romanian exile used it as a way of contesting the destruction of important parts of the city. The state, however, made it a difficult task. An unreported

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conversation with a foreigner was, as of December 1985, a criminal offence.[137] Especially in the late 1980s, human rights organizations found it increasingly hard to report on the situation from Romania. For example, in 1986, the International Human rights Law Group was denied a long-proposed visit to the country.[138] The scarce information coming from Romania led to the setting up in 1985 of the Paris-based Association for the Protection of Monuments and Historical Sites in Romania, with the aim of advocating for the protection of the city's heritage. The Paris Association was one of the main source of information, along with the data provided by correspondents, visitors and diplomats.[139] The efforts of the association did eventually have some impact. Hence, its 1987 appeal submitted to UNESCO determined the Director General of the agency to inquire about the Bucharest demolitions at the Romanian Embassy.[140] Unfortunately, UNESCO representatives could have entered the country only with an invitation from the Romanian authorities, which Bucharest was not willing to offer.[141] It was thus increasingly difficult to report on the situation from Romania and reveal what was happening in the capital.

Since UNESCO could only helplessly watch the systematization process, diplomatic or economic pressure was often discussed as a possible way of improving the condition of the city. Ceaușescu enjoyed huge support from the West ever since he distanced himself from the Soviet Union in 1968. Although the Romanian dictator's popularity gradually faded away as a result of the rise of Gorbachev, diplomacy or economic sanctions were never seriously taken into account until 1989. However, regarding the regime's systematization and urbanization of

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[137] Dennis Deletant, "Crimes against the spirit," *Index on censorship*, 8/89, 26. HU OSA 318-0-5: 108/5; Romania: Human Rights: General, 1988-1994; Country Files; Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights.
[138] "State department report on human rights in Romania," 1986, 10. HU OSA 318-0-5: 108/5; Romania: Human Rights: General, 1988-1994; Country Files; IHF.
[139] Judy Dempsey, "Romania's architectural heritage threatened," BBC current affairs research & information section, Caris Report No. 44/85, 9 April 1985. HU OSA 318-0-5: 106/4; Romania: Destruction of Culture and History, 1984 - 1989; IHF.
[140] Giurescu, *The Razing of Romania's Past*, 63, endnote 100.
[141] Janet Heller, "Ceaușescu, Cultural Vandal," 13 December 1988. HU OSA 318-0-5: 106/4; Romania: Destruction of Culture and History, 1984 - 1989; IHF.

the country, the US Congress did indicate the possibility of implementing economic pressure.[142] Hence, Ceaușescu's plans were also discussed in relation to the US Most Favored Nation trade status (MFN), which the Romanian state enjoyed since 1975. Washington was particularly concerned about the restrictions imposed by Romania on emigration, the persecution of national minorities and religion, as well as the violation of human rights, including also the systematization process. President Ronald Reagan considered the MFN a way of engaging the Romanian side in a dialogue on these problems and a way of improving the situation within the country.[143] But the worrying reports that were coming from Romania in the 1980s led to disputes between President and Congress, the former being eager to keep Romania as an important East European partner, whereas many congressmen advocated against maintaining Romania's MFN.

Romania seemed however to adapt to these new conditions.[144] In 1986 for example, despite a close vote in the House of Representatives (216 to 190), the destruction of religious buildings was performed after the American President extended the MFN. By 1988 however, considering Romania's growing rigidity, the situation was becoming unbearable for both sides. The US became less willing to tolerate Ceaușescu's abuses. Ceaușescu on the other hand was no longer inclined to accept American terms. This situation is illustrated in a meeting of the Romanian Communist Party's (PCR) Permanent Bureau of the Political Executive Committee, during which Ceaușescu stated that: "We cannot accept the granting of the clause based on the conditions imposed on us."[145] Hence, Romania willingly renounced the trade status in 1988 and decided to pay its foreign debt by 1990. Thus, the idea of

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[142] "Bulldozing Romania's past," *The Times*, 4 January 1989, 8. HU OSA 318-0-5: 106/4; Romania: Destruction of Culture and History, 1984 - 1989; IHF.
[143] Ronald Reagan, "Message to the Congress on Trade With Romania, Hungary, and China," 2 June 1987. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=34362.
[144] Dan Ionescu, "More Protests Against Demolitions," 33.
[145] "Stenograma ședinței Biroului Permanent al Comitetului Politic Executiv al C.C. al P.C.R. din ziua de 25 februarie 1988" [Minutes of the Permanent Bureau of the Political Executive Committee of the CC al PCR from 25 February 1988], ANR, SANIC, CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, file no. 8/1988, 6.

preventing the destruction of Bucharest through economic and diplomatic means proved to be an illusion.

While abroad there were some attempts to reveal the real situation behind the systematization of Bucharest and put pressure on the state, within the country the population was rather passive. Besides the regime's persecution of opponents in general, some argued that the lack of dissent could be explained by the immediate benefits in the form of new accommodation in agro-industrial centers.[146] Nevertheless, during the 1980s even carrying a photo camera in the demolished areas could have led to arrest.[147] Moreover, although the expropriations were carried out anyway, the owners were asked to officially specify whether they agree or not with the relocation. For the construction of the Izvor-Coșbuc thoroughfare, 21 owners gave their permission, 53 refused and 73 did not express their opinion.[148] For the systematization of the Unification Sqaure - Căuzași Square on the other hand, 235 owners agreed with the expropriation, 78 refused and 67 did not show up to state their opinion.[149] Even in case of refusal the demolition was carried out and the dislocated people lost the opportunity of obtaining new hosing.[150] The population was thus discouraged from taking part in protests.

Probably the first significant collective protest occurred in July 1986, when approximately 200 parishioners occupied a Seventh-day Adventist church in order to prevent its demolition.[151] Although the church was eventually put down, the authorities did promise

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[146] "Bulldozing Romania's past," 8.
[147] Architect Aurelian Stroe claims to have been in such a position. See Aurelian Stroe, AIOCIMS, interview no. 1556 by Raluca Popa, 2 July 2002.
[148] "Consiliului de Miniștri supune spre aprobare proiectul de decret privind aprobarea măsurilor pentru realizarea unor obiective de investiții în zona noului centru civic al municipiului București" [The Council of Ministers submits for approval the draft decree regarding the approving of the measures for achieving investment objectives in the new civic center area of the Bucharest municipality] ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Gospodăria de Partid [Household department], file no. 4/1985, 15.
[149] ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Economică, file no. 527/1986, 9.
[150] Iosa, *Bucarest. L'emblème d'une nation*, 199.
[151] Dan Ionescu, "More Protests Against Demolitions," 33.

that they would build a new one.[152] The promise occurred amid attempts in the US Congress House and Senate to undo Reagan's decision to extend the MFN. The orthodox community on the other hand, lacking support from abroad, became more active towards the end of the regime. According to RFE journalist and art historian Dan Ionescu, in 1988 several hundred-people attempted to stop the demolition of the Holy Friday Church as the authorities were preparing to demolish it, leading to the intervention of the militia and probably also *Securitate* men.[153] Thus, the protests that did take place were rather marginal and the authorities managed to keep them under control.

Eventually it was the intelligentsia that had to intervene to prevent the destruction of the urban heritage. The protests seemed to have had some effect, considering the authorities' decision to eventually move the Mihai Vodă church instead of destroying it. But ironically, what quickly followed in the area was the demolition of other churches.[154] One form of protest against the demolition of the church was a letter sent on 24 January 1985 to the Secretary for Ideology and Propaganda of the party's Central Committee, also published in the Western media. The authors were authorities in the field of history and archeology, members of the Central State Commission of the National Cultural Patrimony. Although not clearly stated, the letter infers the contradiction between the regime's legitimization through national symbols and the demolition of a church built by Michael the Brave, the historical figure with which Ceaușescu obsessively associated himself.[155]

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[152] Ottamay, "Romania easing curbs on religion," *The Washington Post*, 16 September 1986, FF060 B-wire. HU OSA 300-60-7: 42/2; Foreign Press Survey on Romania, 1986-09-01; Foreign Press Survey on Romania; Romanian Unit; RFE/RL RI.
[153] Dan Ionescu, "Orthodox Priest Writes to the World Council of Churches," Romanian SR/1, 13 January 1988, 46. HU OSA 300-8-47: 46/4; Situation Reports: Romania, 1988; Situation Reports; Publications Department; RFE/RL RI.
[154] "Historians Protest Against Church Demolitions," Romanian SR/1, 10 January 1986, 20. HU OSA 300-60-1: 2/5; Administration: National Committees: Civic Center, 1983 - 1989; Subject Files; Romanian Unit; RFE/RL RI.
[155] Ibid., 19-20. The signatories were D. M. Pippidi, Grigore Ionescu, Vasile Dragut, Dinu C. Giurescu, Radu Popa, Răzvan Theodorescu and Aurelian Triscu.

Another supposed success of the experts was the sparing of the Lipscani-Unification Square area, part of the old city center, and two churches that were anyway outside the Political-Administrative Center area.[156] While the Unification Square was redesigned and integrated in the new center, the old city center was saved from the changes that were occurring in the city, even though in 1979 Ceaușescu announced the systematization of the Blănari-Lipscani-Curtea Veche area.[157] Unfortunately, these situations in which the regime could be persuaded to rethink its strategy were very few. The most dramatic situation was probably that of the Văcărești monastery, one of the most emblematic religious buildings in South-Eastern Europe. The 1935 master plan, which influenced the Political-Administrative Center project, considered the monastery one of the most valuable monuments in the Balkan peninsula and proposed solutions for its transformation from a prison into a tourist attraction.[158] Although it was situated outside the Political-Administrative Center, the monument was demolished to make way for a new palace of justice, which was never constructed.

Since the demolitions targeted many churches and monasteries, the position of the BOR was closely analyzed. Some resistance from the clergy was indeed reported, but it came only from the local vicars.[159] The lower clergy sent to the West by BOR in order to represent the Romanian diaspora also attempted to publicize the abuses of the regime. Such priests

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[156] Gelu Ionescu, "Secțiuni din documentarul privind distrugerea unei a 5-a părți din București în 1984 și 85," [Sections of the documentary on the destruction of a 5th part of Bucharest in 1984 and 85] Domestic Bloc, 14 January 1985, 5. HU OSA 300-60-1: 147/1; Culture: Patrimonium, 1985; Subject Files; Romanian Unit; RFE/RL RI.
[157] "Indicațiile date de tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu, secretar general al Partidului Comunist Român, președintele Republicii Socialiste România, cu prilejul vizitei de lucru în Capitală - 16 decembrie 1979" [The directives given by comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, secretary general of the Romanian Communist Party, President of the Socialist Republic of Romania, on the occasion of the working visit to the Capital - 16 December 1979], ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică [Organizational department], file no. 4/1980, 2.
[158] Marcu et al., *Planul Director de Sistematizare*, 70.
[159] Gelu Ionescu, "Secțiuni din documentarul," 7.

hesitated out of fear to return to Romania.[160] The hierarchy of the Church was however rather passive, as shown in the next section.

3.2. The attitude of the regime: propaganda and repression

As early as the inauguration of the constructions, in June 1984, the regime tried to assure the population that "the urban reshaping of this area takes place while preserving the old historical and architectural monuments."[161] However, considering the growing number of critics by 1986, the propaganda made efforts to justify the systematization. The easiest way of doing this was through critics against the bourgeois city, the legacy of the former royal administration. The changes suffered by the city were described in terms of modernization, or, as a *Scânteia* article puts it, "the end of the reign of the unpaved streets."[162]

But the assurances offered by the authorities were to no avail against the criticism received from abroad, considering the proportions of the demolitions. The Ceaușescu regime was visibly irritated with the harsh critics it received from the West. Hence, responses were delivered by Corneliu Vadim Tudor, labeled by the Western media as Ceaușescu's "court poet."[163] The monumentality criticized by Ceaușescu 15 years earlier was now used as a justification for the construction of the new center: "The idea of the Metro, of the large boulevards and of the monumental buildings was an old dream of Bucharest, it was by no means a cutting-edge invention."[164] Vadim Tudor argued that the demolished districts needed renewal and contested the value of some of the monuments destroyed while overlooking the

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[160] See for example the case of Ion Duca. Ionescu, "Orthodox Priest Writes to the World Council of Churches," 44.
[161] Radio Bucharest PR I, 25 June 1984 21-22 h, 821. HU OSA 300-60-4: 43/3; Romanian Monitoring, 1984-06-21; Romanian Monitoring; Subject Files; Romanian Unit; RFE/RL RI.
[162] Eugen Barbu, "Temeiuri ale marelui respect" [Grounds of the great respect], *Scânteia*, 26 January 1986, 2. HU OSA 300-60-5: 13/1; Romanian Press Survey, 1986-01-04; Subject Files; Romanian Unit; RFE/RL RI.
[163] After the fall of communism, such comments were used against Vadim Tudor, who became a prominent politician and almost won the 2000 presidential elections.
[164] Corneliu Vadim Tudor, "Minciuna are picioare scurte" [The lie has short legs], *Săptămâna,* 10 January1986, 7.

most valuable ones.[165] The historical value of the Brâncoveanu hospital was thus contested.[166] However, even Ceaușescu underlined in October 1980 the necessity of avoiding the demolition of the hospital in the process of constructing the Victory of Socialism Boulevard.[167] Since the attacks targeted mainly the French media, comparisons were made between the urban policies for Bucharest to the ones implemented by Haussmann for Paris between 1853 and 1869.[168] This was another way of illustrating the utility of the systematization process and the fact that the systematization of Bucharest followed previous examples.

The discourse on monumentality was paralleled by examples of the state's care for preservation and the existing architectural heritage. Hence, the re-settling of churches was used as proof of the authorities' commitment to protect the city's monuments.[169] Renewal and preservation were also seen as part of the same policy: "Within the concerns of urban renewal (...) the care for preserving and maintaining the architectural values of the city is also a part."[170] In the same manner, the Romanian news agency, *Agerpres*, repeatedly emphasized the preservationist measures taken during the systematization process: "Urban planning and development are carried out with an eye to the preservation of the principal historical and architectural monuments in the area, to the recovery of valuable art and architectural elements featured by other buildings."[171] It is easy to observe that these arguments go close to the conflicting interwar debates on preservation and renewal.

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[165] Dan Ionescu, "Romania Responds to Western Criticism of Urban Demolition," Romanian SR/3, 24 February 1986, 9-10. HU OSA 300-8-47: 46/2; Situation Reports: Romania, 1986; Situation Reports; Publications Department; RFE/RL RI.
[166] Vadim Tudor, "Minciuna are picioare scurte," 7.
[167] ANR, SANIC, fond CC al PCR, Organizational department, file no. 4/1980, 43.
[168] Dan Ionescu, "Romania Responds to Western Criticism of Urban Demolition," 10.
[169] "Translation de plusieurs edifices a Bucarest," *Agerpres*, 16 July 1985. HU OSA 300-60-1: 147/1; Culture: Patrimonium, 1985; Subject Files; Romanian Unit; RFE/RL RI.
[170] Marius Georgescu, "Preocuparea permanentă a edililor bucureșteni: conservarea patrimoniului imobiliar de valoare" [The permanent concern of the Bucharest mayors: the preservation of the valuable estate heritage] *România Liberă*, 4 April 1987, 2. HU OSA 300-60-1: 147/2; Culture: Patrimonium, 1986-1988; Subject Files; Romanian Unit; RFE/RL RI.
[171] "A valuable Bucharest monument - the Mihai Voda church is re-sited," *Agerpres*, 1 August 1985, HU OSA 300-60-1: 147/1; Culture: Patrimonium, 1985; Subject Files; Romanian Unit; RFE/RL RI.

Regarding the population of the city, the regime took from the very beginning measures aimed at hindering any possible protests. Working at night, under the protection of state security forces, was a common practice when demolitions were carried out. An unusual situation occurred during the destruction of the Cotroceni church, situated close to the Cotroceni Palace, the residence of the President. It was claimed that the destruction lasted for four months and that during the entire period the process was isolated by fences and guarded by the Ministry of Interior's troops.[172] On other occasions, however, the regime was apparently less cautious. The way in which the demolition of the Spirea Veche church was carried out could have led to a popular protest. The church was situated on the location of the future palace and hence its faith was clear from the very beginning. The authorities' decision to blow it up on the night before Palm Sunday meant that in the morning the result was witnessed by hundreds of people who were planning to attend the liturgy.[173] The incident however did not lead to a public protest.

Keeping BOR quiet was another measure taken by the regime, since the demolitions targeted many religious buildings. Destroying Orthodox churches and monasteries meant that the religious aspect of Romanian identity was brutally removed in the 1980s. This constituted another significant difference between Ceaușescu's vision of a national architecture and the ideas of his predecessors. Hence, even the Latinity and the monumentality envisioned by the 1935 master plan left room for the old churches, namely to save the city from "total Americanization and banalization."[174] The attitude of BOR was thus closely monitored abroad.

Despite some opposition from the lower clergy, BOR was however a national Church. Hence, since its hierarchy was based in Romania, the communist state could successfully

[172] Gelu Ionescu, "Secțiuni din documentarul," 13.
[173] Ibid., 5.
[174] Marcu et al., *Planul director de sistematizare*, 70.

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control it as early as the 1940s. Patriarch Moisescu's old age and subsequent death in 1986 was another source of restrainment. RFE's report documentary on the Bucharest demolitions provides an idea of how strongly connected to the state the church was. Hence, in many cases, not only that the church hierarchy did not oppose the demolitions, but it actually offered its approval. Such is the case of the churches Izvor, Spirea Veche and Albă-Postăvari, demolished in 1984.[175] Metropolitan Anotonie, a leading figure of BOR, even justified the demolitions by arguing that the city's modernization and urbanization is an unavoidable and general phenomenon.[176] Many orthodox monuments were thus helpless in the face of the demolitions.

Realizing that its preventive measures and the propaganda were not enough to silence protests, the state took legal measures against those who dared to contest its architectural plans. For example, the French journalist Didier Fauqueux received a five-year ban because of his writings on the demolitions from Bucharest.[177] Romanian citizens were also targeted. Architect Ion Fistioc lost his job after sending five letters to the CC in 1985 and 1986.[178] These letters requested the halting of the destructions and also political reforms. The architect was arrested twice for his actions, in June 1987 and July 1988, but he was released each time shortly after.[179]

The discussions regarding a second capital for Romania were also placed in the context of the regime's response to critics. In September 1986, Ceaușescu suggested that Târgoviște, a city with a population of about 85000, might become the second capital of Romania. Observers tried to find various explanations for such a move. Hence, RFE argued

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[175] Gelu Ionescu, "Secțiuni din documentarul," 12.
[176] "The 'Paris of the East' - Destroyed," *Frontier*, no. 1, January-February 1988, 2. HU OSA 318-0-5: 106/4; Romania: Destruction of Culture and History, 1984 - 1989; IHF.
[177] AFP (Paris), 22 January 1986 quoted in Dan Ionescu, "Romania Responds to Western Criticism," 10.
[178] "More Protests Against Demolitions," 35.
[179] Vlad Mitric-Ciupe, *Arhitecți români și detenția politică 1944 - 1964: între destin concentraționar și vocație profesională* [Romanian architects and political detention 1944 - 1964: between prison destiny and professional vocation]. (Bucharest: Institutul național pentru studiul totalitarismului, 2013), 530.

that the city's lack of an intelligentsia and the up-rooted peasantry that constituted the majority of the population were seen by the authorities as a mean of escaping the hostility it encountered in Bucharest.[180] However, the prospect of a second capital should be seen from the perspective of Ceaușescu's cult of personality that relied on the association of the dictator with figures of Romanian history. Târgoviște was the capital of the medieval ruler Mircea the Elder, a figure frequently used for strengthening Ceaușescu's claimed role of warden of the nation. This can explain the desire to make Târgoviște a symbolic capital.

To sum up, the regime encountered a weak opposition from both the population and the intellectuals primarily because its preventive measures left little room for public discontent. The silent way in which the construction of the Political-Administrative Center was carried out is thus suggestive for the state's general abuses against cultural heritage, minorities and religion. The problems generated by the construction of the Political-Administrative Center did not end however with the fall of the Ceaușescu regime.

3.3. Bucharest after 1989

The Ceaușescu regime was overthrown in December 1989 and the leadership of the state passed to the National Salvation Front led by Ion Iliescu. The construction of the Political-Administrative Center was abandoned. Considering its position as one of the most representative legacies of the communist regime, numerous debates emerged concerning the faith of the communist center in general and that of the House of the Republic in particular. Many supported the idea of demolishing the building, while others wanted its integration in the urban landscape. Hence, numerous solutions emerged, from the idea of a casino, to a museum of communism.[181] The first major decision in this regard was to finish the palace and bring in the Parliament. Anca Petrescu was thus allowed to continue her work. The Chamber

[180] Dan Ionescu, "A second Capital for Romania?" Romanian SR/12, 6 November 1986, 23. HU OSA 300-8-47: 46/2; Situation Reports: Romania, 1986; Situation Reports; Publications Department; RFE/RL RI.
[181] Salecl, *(Per) versions of Love and Hate*, 90.

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of Deputies was moved in the building in 1996, followed by the Senate in 2004. Meanwhile, the official name of the building became the Palace of Parliament (*Palatul Parlamentului)*.

The integration of the former communist center in the rest of the city was again debated during the *Bucharest 2000* competition. The project was considered a success, gathering participants and projects from both Romania and from abroad. The aim of the competition was to re-integrate a large part of the central area of Bucharest, which was affected by a radical urban intervention which impacted both the identity of the central area and of the city itself.[182] The first prize was won by two architects from Hamburg, Meinhard von Gerkan and Joachim Zais. The project propped the construction of high rise buildings that would have challenged the dominance of the building's height.[183] Furthermore, the project proposed a future business center for the city and was praised by the jury for offering a solution that could be gradually implemented.[184] The project required however an investment of 18 billion dollars at 1999 costs, bigger than the entire foreign investment in Romania since 2000.[185] Along with the excessive costs, the political turmoil from the late 1990s and early 2000s further blocked the application of the *Bucharest 2000* solution.

While the search for a solution for the Political-Administrative Center was seemingly abandoned, most political actors proved sensitive to the idea of constructing in Bucharest a Cathedral of National Salvation (*Catedrala Mântuirii Neamului*). As shown in the first chapter, cathedrals have a long history of exhibiting the religious aspect of Romanian identity. Regarding Bucharest, there were numerous proposals for a cathedral during the Kingdom of Romania, from Carol I to the Legionary State. However, the lack of financial resources, the

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[182] *Bucureşti 2000: Concurs Internaţional de Urbanism* [Bucharest 2000: International Urbanism Contest] (Bucharest: Simetria, 1997), 21.
[183] Ibid., 38-39.
[184] Ibid., 40.
[185] Augustin Ioan, "Urban Policies and the Politics of Public Space in Bucharest," in *The Urban Mosaic of The Urban Mosaic of Post-Socialist Europe: Space, Institutions and Policy* ed. Sasha Tsenkova and Zorica Nedovic-Budic (Heidelbeg: Physica, 2006), 341.

political turmoil and the subsequent communist takeover hindered any possibility of implementing the project.

Following the 1989 regime change, BOR was quick to revive the prewar project and urged the political leaders to support the construction of the Cathedral. After more than two decades from the fall communism and several proposals for a location, most of them in the area of the former communist center, the construction started in 2010. The designated location is an area behind the Palace of Parliament. The cathedral will be almost 30 m taller than the Palace of Parliament.[186] It was debated however whether constructing two large buildings having such antagonistic meanings would be suitable.[187] The Orthodox Church is thus reclaiming the position it lost during communism by challenging the symbolic value of the former communist center. By isolating the 1980s developments, there is thus an attempt to reintegrate Orthodoxy in Romanian identity and continue the interwar pattern of exhibiting this identity through architecture.

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[186] Duncan Light and Craig Young, "Urban space, political identity and unwanted legacies of state socialism: Bucharest's problematic Centru Civic in the post-socialist era," in *From socialist to post-socialist cities: cultural politics of architecture, urban planning, and identity in Eurasia*, ed. Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen (Routledge, 2016), 43-44. https://books.google.hu/books?id=kof7CwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro#v=onepage&q&f=false.

[187] Augustin Ioan, "The History of Nothing: Contemporary Architecture and Public Space in Romania," *Artmargins*, 3 December 2006. http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/featured-articles-sp-829273831/156-the-history-of-nothing-contemporary-architecture-and-public-space-in-romania.

Conclusion

This thesis brought a new perspective on the influence of Romanian 20th century architecture and planning on the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center project. I also offered a new interpretation of the decision-making process behind the construction of the new center. Hence, I demonstrated that Ceaușescu's policy did not exhibit the ambiguous attitude towards preservation, national architecture and monumentality, present in the previous decades. While during the first part of his regime Ceaușescu manifested a desire to preserve the architectural heritage and criticized monumentality, starting with 1977 his discourses and practices favored a national-monumental architecture that could disregard the existing constructions. Moreover, in contrast to the belief that the 1977 earthquake triggered this shift, I argued that a change can be observed as early as 1976. The March 1977 discussions for the Bucharest Political-Administrative Center only confirmed this change and signaled the re-emergence of monumentality in the official discourse.

I also demonstrated that the Romanian President made little use of the 1935 master plan, which is often used by scholars to illustrate Ceaușescu's initial reliance on interwar ideas and on the experienced architects. Although the archives demonstrate that Ceaușescu was indeed aware of the plan, the party documents show that the Political-Administrative Center project was not from the start based on the interwar master plan. Furthermore, through an analysis of the systematization proposals, I argued that as early as June 1977 the communist project already differed significantly from the interwar plan. The party documents also revealed that these changes were further facilitated by the party's gradual limitation of the role of the architects, such as the change of the statute of the Union of Romanian Architects in December 1978.

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Along with the marginalization of the experienced architects, Ceaușescu's involvement in drawing the new style, to the detriment of the experienced architects, contributed to the difficulties in understanding the new national architecture. Thus, I argued that Ceaușescu's unclear requirements for a new national-monumental architecture combined with his older dissatisfaction with the experienced modernist architects led to the appointment of Anca Petrescu as chief architect of the Palace of the Republic.

In the end, the Political-Administrative Center illustrates the failure of the Ceaușescu regime to exhibit a new national architecture, by reflecting a rather transnational architecture. Although the final result seems to reflect a post-modern architecture, the damaged caused to the pre-existing architectural heritage goes close to the architectural ideas envisioned by Iancu and Le Corbusier, as well as the Nazi, Fascist and Soviet projects for Berlin, Rome and Moscow.

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